

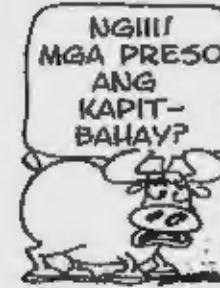
■ WORLD/A26
At 70, Japanese
is oldest man
to summit Everest

■ BUSINESS/B1
Banco de Oro, Equitable
PCIB merger fizzles out
as SM group offer lapses

■ LIFESTYLE/C1
38 ways to beat
boredom, get busy
at tailend of summer

■ WORLD/A26
Thaksin stages
comeback, takes
control of Thai govt

Bilibid or not: Munti cops,
teachers to get dream homes



Jocelyn R. Uy
BILIBID OR NOT.
Public school teachers
and policemen in
Muntinlupa will finally get
a chance to build their
dream homes—in the
sprawling New Bilibid.

BILIBID/A4

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, May 24, 2006



★★ 6 sections / Vol 21 / No. 165 P1B website: www.inq7.net

New contraceptives make
menstrual period optional

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY—FOR YOUNG WOMEN
with a world of choices, even that monthly curse,
the menstrual period, is now optional.

Due to birth control pills and other hormonal
contraceptives, a growing number of women are
taking the path chosen by 22-year-old Stephanie
Sardinha. She hasn't had a period since she was
17.

"It's really one of the best things I've ever
done," she said.

NEW CONTRACEPTIVES/A21

GMA: I'll take RP to 'Enchanted Kingdom' of First World

By Christine O. Avendano

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday rallied employers to the side of government, saying that by working together they could achieve a better future for the country and reach the "Enchanted Kingdom" of

First World success.

"Let's stay together. Let's dream together. And what do I mean by being in the Enchanted Kingdom, we can operationalize that? Let's be among the countries of the First World in 20 years," the President told the largest national gathering of em-

ployers at the 27th National Conference of Employers at the Manila Hotel yesterday.

At the start of her speech, the President agreed with the theme of the employers' convention which was to "Survive, Compete, Succeed."

"As Francis (Chua, president

of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce) said, we've shown we can survive. Now we must compete and then succeed. Then we will be in the Enchanted Kingdom," the President said to laughter from the audience.

According to Labor Secretary Pa-

tricia Sto. Tomas, the reference to the Enchanted Kingdom also had to do with the chair of the conference's organizing committee being the owner of the Enchanted Kingdom theme park in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Ms Arroyo said the theme of the convention was "logical" giv-

en this "age of globalization and high technology, and in these days of oil price surges."

"Your response is logical: Survive, compete with the rest of the world and succeed," she said.

But when the President ap-

GMA/A4

Killings alarm int'l group

Gonzales
lying about
mass graves,
says Zubiri

By Grace Cantal-Albasin
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Michael Lim Ubac
in Manila

MALAYBALAY CITY—WHAT MASS
graves?

Bukidnon Gov. Jose Ma. Zubiri
yesterday belied claims by National
Security Adviser Norberto
Gonzales that the military had
unearthed two mass graves in the
province containing the skeletal
remains of 18 communist rebels
and sympathizers who had been
killed by their comrades.

"He (Gonzales) made it appear
that Bukidnon is a massacre field,"

GONZALES/A7

I just wanted
to have fun,
says Abcede

By Alcuin Papa

"I JUST WANTED TO HAVE FUN
with friends."

This was the statement of Presidential
Commission on Good Government (PCGG) Commissioner
Ricardo Abcede on why he celebrated
his birthday on May 12 with former First Lady Imelda
Marcos in attendance.

Abcede and the PCGG are trying
to negotiate a compromise

I JUST/A8



THY KINGDOM COME: President Arroyo poses with Cardinal Ricardo Vidal (left) and Msgr. Francisco Montecillo Padilla and other bishops who attended the episcopal ordination of Padilla at the Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral on Tuesday. Padilla is also the apostolic nuncio to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

PNP, AFP
say they
are not
responsible

By Norman Bordadora
and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE RECURRING SCENARIO in the Philippines of activists being gunned down by motorcycle-riding men is now one of the concerns of Amnesty International (AI).

In its 2006 report, the London-based human rights organization noted the "sharp rise" in the killing of militant activists and community workers, as well as the "climate of impunity" that, it said, was "shielding the perpetrators."

"Most of the attacks were carried out by unidentified assailants on motorcycles, at times wearing face masks, who were often described as 'vigilantes' or hired killers allegedly linked to the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines)," Amnesty International said.

The 318-page report on the state of human rights in 150 countries was presented yesterday to reporters in a press conference by Al Pilipinas executive director Jessica Soto.

On the Philippine situation, the report said: "The number of attacks on leftist activists and community workers rose sharply, with at least 66 fatal shootings re-

KILLINGS/A6

Gov't to allow journalists to bear arms

By Armand N. Nocum
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE GOVERNMENT IS AMENABLE to arming members of the media as a solution to the continuing killing of journalists, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

But Gonzalez said the media

journalists, or the poseurs and mercenaries working mainly for money.

"We discussed [the matter] in the Palace earlier. And if they want to carry firearms, we will allow them to do so as long as they are legitimate [journalists]," Gonzalez said in a phone interview.

He said the proposed solution

"you cannot watch every criminal at every corner."

"If they blame [the media killings] on the government, then I think they should tell us what they want from the government," the justice secretary said.

"Do they want to get bodyguards? Do they want to carry firearms? We will allow them to carry firearms to protect them-

selves," he said.

But according to Gonzalez, not all of the murdered journalists were killed in connection with their profession. He said each case should be thoroughly examined.

"Let us make a complete study of all these people killed. What were the reasons? You have to be

GOVT/A8

Rapu-Rapu's local execs now want Lafayette to stay



By Blanche S. Rivera
and Bobby Q. Labalan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

RAPU-RAPU, ALBAY—AFTER VOWING TO drive Lafayette Philippines Inc. out of this island town late last year, local officials are now singing a different tune.

In a surprising turnaround, the municipal council yesterday asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to allow the Australian mining firm to stay and extract Rapu-Rapu's mineral resources.

A council resolution, passed on May 8 and signed by eight of 10 members, was submitted by Councilor Marino Barranda Jr. to Environment Secretary Angelo T. Reyes yesterday.

It urged the DENR and the Pollution Adjudication Board to immediately allow the resumption of operations of the P1.4-billion Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic project, "subject to compliance with the requirements of the ... government for the protection of the environment and the people's health."

Reyes, along with officials of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and members of the Rapu-Rapu Resource Finding Commission (RRFPC), flew

RAPU-RAPU/A21



ON SITE at Rapu-Rapu: DENR Secretary Angelo Reyes.

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY PEÑERO, PIRESEARCH/05/22/06

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rains
Benguet	Partly Cloudy	Roxas
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy with Rains
La Union	Partly Cloudy	Cebu
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban
Tugaya	Partly Cloudy	Bohol
Lapaz	Partly Cloudy	Santa Fe
Capiz	Partly Cloudy	Zambales
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro
		Cloudy with Rains
		Ormea

'UNPROGRAMMED FUNDS' IN BUDGET

Senators to look at P57-B item



BUDGET MAKERS: Senator Manny Villar confers with Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya and NEDA chief Romulo Neri on the national budget.

ROGER MANGALO

Palace: P31-B cut to affect pro-poor projects

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG SAID YESTERDAY the P31-billion cut in the 2006 national budget proposed by the Senate would hamstring its pro-poor programs meant to bring the gains of the recent tax increases to the masses.

"We welcome the final steps being taken by the Senate in approving the national budget, as well as the assurance of additional allowances for our government employees proposed by the executive [branch]. However, we ask for reasoned consideration of reported budget cuts as these may prejudice grassroots pro-

grams," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a briefing.

The Senate committee on Finance slashed the proposed P1-trillion national budget this year by over P31 billion—P3 billion for the Kilos Asenso Support Fund; P3.7 billion for the Kalayaan Barangay program; P13.1 billion in the compensation adjustment fund; the P10 billion incentive package for early retirees in government, and P2.72 billion worth of projects of the Department of Transportation and Communication—as well as the P65.3 million budget of the Presidential Commission on Good Government.

In turn, the committee approved a P600-million hike in the allocations for the Department of Health, Commission on Higher Education,

University of the Philippines, and the agriculture and fisheries modernization program.

Bunye said the cut items should be restored because "we want the effects of fiscal reforms brought down to the constituents, specifically the poor."

He said Malacañang remained optimistic the senators would take a "second look" at the cuts and see the budget as a showcase of an "executive-legislative" alliance for social justice and economic performance.

Bunye said it was still too early to assess the 2006 budget.

"It's a matter of give and take even after the Senate had [come up with] a final version because it will still be subject to the bicameral conference," he said.

By TJ Burgonio

THE SENATE WILL THOROUGHLY SCRUTINIZE the "unprogrammed funds" totaling P57 billion in the 2006 national budget to come up with a "prudent" outlay, Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. said yesterday.

"Normally, we review that. But we will review it more thoroughly now so we can be sure that we come up with a responsible budget. We'll watch out for both the unprogrammed and programmed funds," Villar told reporters.

In the House-approved P1.04-trillion budget, unprogrammed funds totaled P57.1 billion. These are funds that are on standby for emergency purposes.

Villar, who sponsored the budget measure on the floor last Monday in which the Senate recommended a P31-billion cut in the national outlay, said he expected the debates to last until next week.

The senators had earlier predicted the measure would be approved by Friday.

"I'm confident we will nail it next week. In fact, I wanted the debates to be finished this week. If not, the debates might extend until Monday, but not beyond Monday," Villar, chair of the committee on finance, said.

Villar did not discount the possibility that budget items the Senate deleted—the P13.1-billion compensation adjustment fund and the P10-billion incentive package for employees availing of the rationalization program—would be restored at the bicameral conference.

The compensation adjustment fund was deleted since a measure for the purpose had been passed by the House. The incentive package, on the other hand, was cut because the rationalization program has not been implemented.

"The chances are high [the cuts will be restored]," Villar said.

Apart from the two items, the Senate also deleted the P3-billion Kilos Asenso Fund and the P3.69-billion Kalayaan Barangay Pro-

gram Fund, both believed to be "slush funds."

The Kilos Asenso fund is the administration's counterpart fund for local government projects, while the Kalayaan fund would cover livelihood and infrastructure projects in conflict areas.

The Senate also cut P2.721 billion for airports and navigational facilities from the budget of the Department of Transportation and Communications.

And, to punish the Presidential Commission on Good Government for snubbing committee hearings, the Senate deleted the P65.34-million budget of the PCGG.

Administration Sen. Ralph Recto, for his part, proposed that the Senate use part of the P31-billion cut for the internal revenue allotments (IRA) of the local government units amounting to P17.5 billion.

"The LGUs are victims of double jeopardy. First, their IRA was illegally held. And when this was finally released to them, a deduction was made instead of paying them interest as a way of saying 'we are sorry,'" Recto said in a statement.

The LGUs stood to get some P10 billion in IRA in 2000, but this was placed under unprogrammed funds in the national budget. This doubled to P20 billion the following year when the budget was reenacted.

Prior to the IRA "monetization" program, the Arroyo administration released some P2.5 billion in impounded IRA funds to the LGUs, according to Recto.

The Supreme Court later ruled that setting aside part of the IRA was unconstitutional. The Department of Justice, in an opinion last year, said the remaining P17.5 billion should be released to the LGUs.

Arroyo to visit Spain

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO is set to leave for Spain next month to look for job opportunities for Filipinos, unmindful of the intent of opposition lawmakers to file another impeachment case by July.

The President announced she was planning a trip to Spain in a speech she delivered at the 27th National Conference of Employers at the Manila Hotel.

Talking about new markets for overseas employment, Ms Arroyo said she would go to Spain at the end of June to check out Spain's labor market.

"Spain's labor market will hopefully open for 100,000 of our workers in the next two years," she said.

"I also hope to be able to get Spain to [invest in tourism in] the Philippines," she added.

In her speech, the President also talked about job opportunities for Filipinos in Canada's provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

These three Canadian provinces were seeking labor agreements with the Philippines, she said, noting that this could include "temporary migration with an option for permanent settlement."

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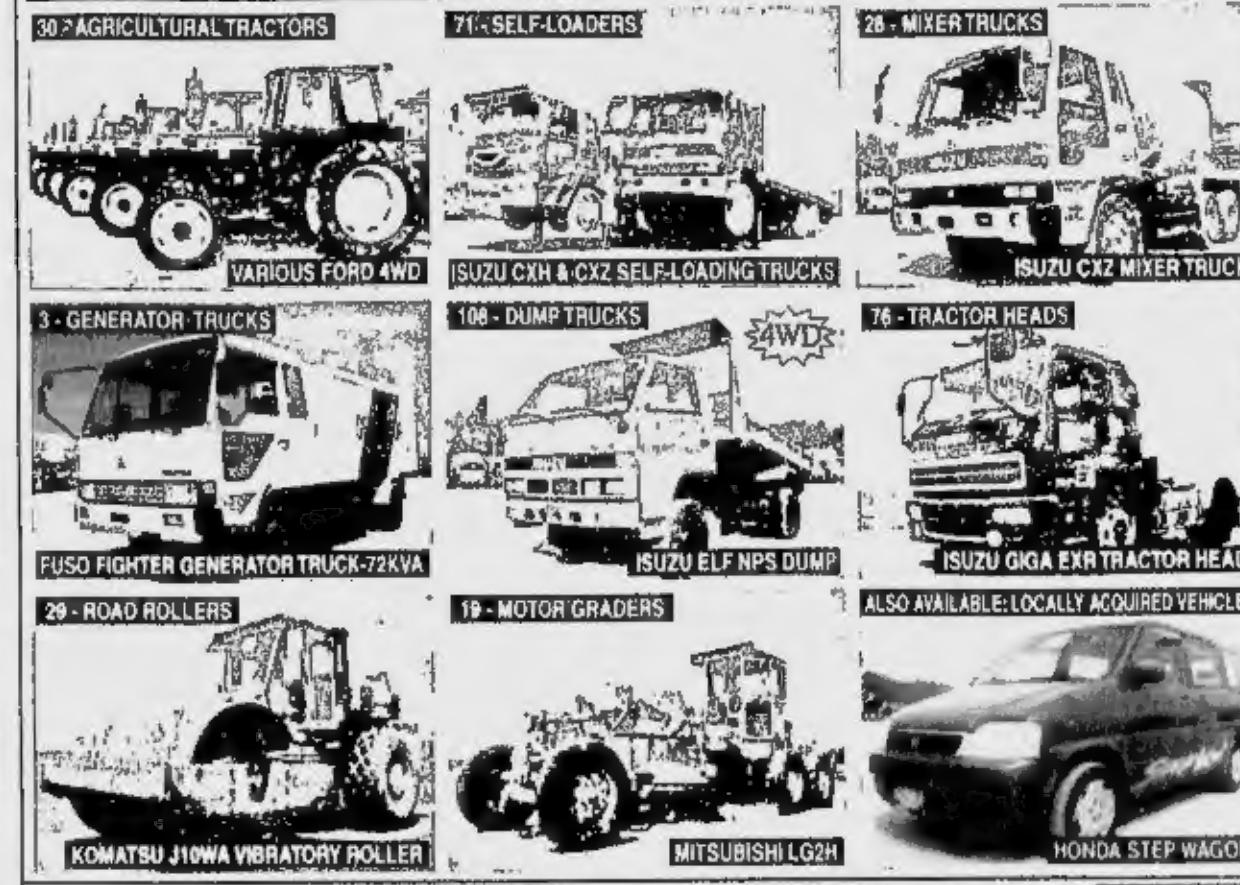
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Gringo, 6 others placed on hold-departure list on coup raps

FORMER SEN. GREGORIO Honasan and six other people, mostly retired military colleagues and members of his Senate staff, have been placed on the Bureau of

Immigration's hold-departure list for their alleged participation in the failed Oakwood mutiny in 2003, the bureau announced yesterday.

It identified the retired military

officers on the list of people barred from leaving the country as Colonels Ernesto Macaluya, Virgilio Briones, and Romeo Lazo and Capt. Felix Turingan. The

members of Honasan's Senate staff put on the same list were George Duldulao and Lina Reyes.

All are at large.

Immigration Commissioner

Alipio Fernandez Jr. issued the hold-departure order against Honasan and the others on Friday in compliance with an April 28 directive from Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Oscar Pimentel,

who is handling the coup d'etat charge against them.

They were formally charged last Feb. 25. Leila B. Salaveyra

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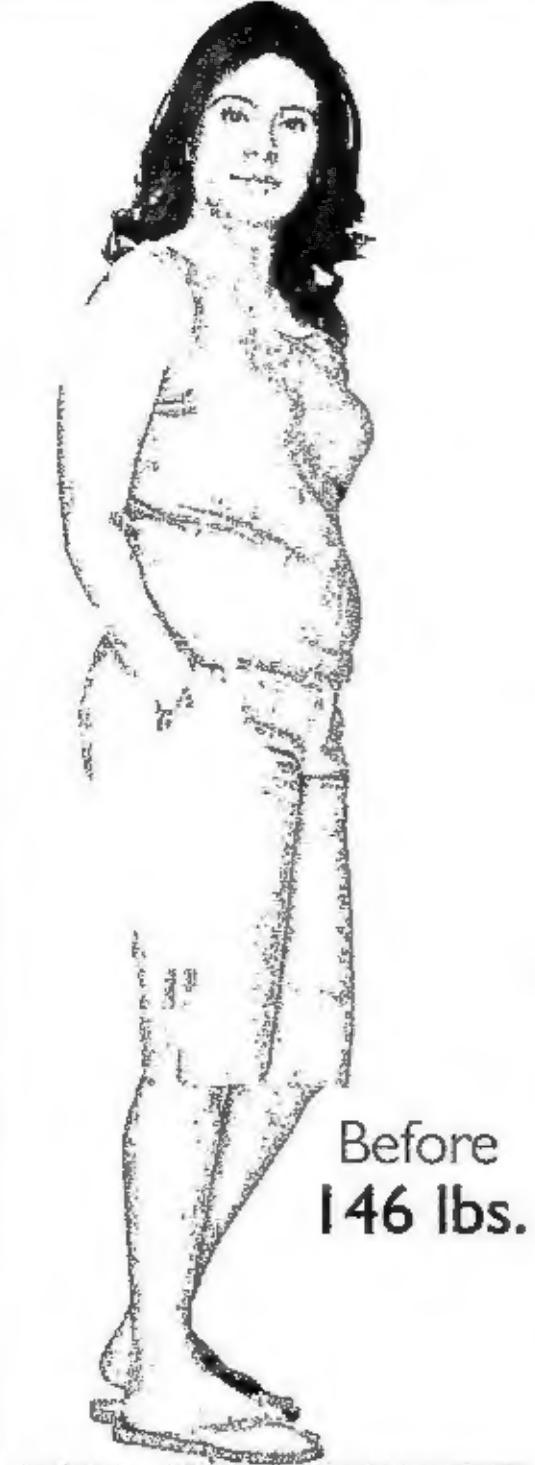
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GMA: I'll take RP to 'Enchanted Kingdom' of First World

From page A1

pealed for a wage increase for workers with the country's biggest employers' group, Employers Confederation of the Philippines president Renato Soriano gently let her down, saying the group did not think a wage hike would be wise at this time.

"I reiterate the support I expressed on Labor Day for a reasonable wage hike hammered out by the tripartite regional wage boards in such a way that there will be no surprises insofar as business costs are concerned," the President said, re-

newing the appeal she first made on May 1.

Soriano said it was Ecop's position that a wage adjustment now would just drive up the prices of commodities.

"The best [way] is just to maybe wait for sometime, let's see the effect..." Soriano told reporters.

Wage hike untimely

He said there was also a need to protect the four million unemployed who would suffer the most if prices of goods went up.

But Soriano said Ecop would definitely participate in the wage

board meetings to discuss wage hike petitions.

"We will argue in the public hearings that there is at this time no need for an adjustment because we think it is not timely, we think it's inflationary, we think it will result in further uncompetitiveness of Philippine products in the domestic and world markets. We think it's not good for the country as a whole," he said.

Indeed, the conference resolutions that the employers drew up and presented to the President made no mention of a wage hike.

But the employers said they would seek to create decent jobs,

flexible and competitive labor markets, and improve the ratio between the demand for jobs and the supply of skills, among other things.

Fewer strikes

In her speech, Ms Arroyo also congratulated employer and labor groups, proudly noting that the country now had "the lowest strikes in Philippine history."

Zero reason for strikes

"We are also pushing for conciliation and mediation as an alternative to arbitration," she told the employers.

The President said the Department of Labor and Employment recently signed a memorandum of agreement with the Archdiocese of Manila "so that Catholic schools and hospitals, among others, will attempt to settle labor disputes first before cases are filed."

This would lessen the number of disputes going to arbitration and would help clean up the government's case dockets, she said.

The President suggested that Ecop come up with similar agreements with the DOLE and with local government units.

"Our goal is to have a zero reason to have strikes by the end of

my term in 2010," she said.

Sto. Tomas told reporters that the government's goal of a zero-strike record in 2010 was "doable," noting that strikes were in decline.

From a record high of 531 in 1986, the number of strikes remained in the three-digit figures until 1993, Sto. Tomas said.

In 2000, strikes numbered only 60, declining to 43 in 2001, 36 in 2002, 28 in 2003, 24 in 2004 and 22 last year.

The labor secretary attributed the decline to the fact that the "conciliatory machinery was working."

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Bilibid or not: Munti cops, teachers to get dream homes

Corrections

IN THE MAY 17 ISSUE, a story on Page A2—"Magdalo trial: Another witness links Gringo, but..."—misstated the name of a defense lawyer in the trial of the accused Oakwood mutineers. The lawyer's name is Theodore Te Roel—not Theodore Te Roel.

IN THE MAY 19 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Third Filipino climber on track for 1-2-3 finish"—misstated the name of North America's tallest peak. The highest mountain in North America is Mt. Denali—not Denale. Situated in Alaska, Mt. Denali is the native name for Mt. McKinley.

IN THE MAY 22 ISSUE, an In the Know article on Page A23—"What went before"—misstated the first name of a Philippine president. The President's name is Diosdado—not Disodado—Macapagal.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors by writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, China Races Avenue corner Masarado Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tiro, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

From page A1

Prisons (NBP) compound.

Muntinlupa City announced recently that a low-cost housing project for its employees had been allotted in the master plan for the development of the NBP Reservation Area in Barangay Poblacion.

Of the 416-hectare "disposable" land in the compound, Metro Manila Urban Services for the Poor (MMUSP) consultants had proposed that 12.5 hectares be allocated to some 1,500 of the city's public school teachers, policemen and other local government employees in the low income bracket, said Noel Cardona, head of the city's Urban Poor Affairs Office.

"But we have not yet really established the beneficiaries. A technical working group will conduct a survey to identify them," Cardona told the Inquirer in a phone interview yesterday.

Also for squatters

The proposal includes the construction of a three- or four-story building in the allocated 12.5 hectares. The building, to be comprised of 1,500 units, would house some "qualified" informal settlers from the Philippine National Railways site.

Another 50 hectares of the 416 hectares had been previously designated for a separate socialized housing project for the 10,500 families displaced by the South Rail project, Cardona said.

One-third of the property would be developed into a commercial area. Public markets and other business establishments would be constructed to make the future neighborhood a "self-sustaining" community.

The rest of the property, about 200 hectares, would be for future government buildings and other infrastructure, Cardona said.

Carefully planned

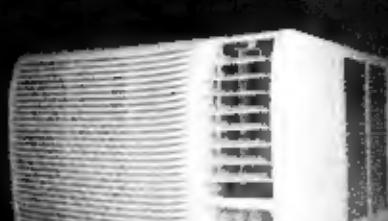
Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi welcomed the plan and urged local government employees to be extra patient, saying the project was carefully being planned with them in mind.

The local housing board was scheduled to meet with the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council next week to prepare the census of target beneficiaries, Cardona said.

The local board is composed of representatives from the local government, the National Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, Philippine Business for Social Progress and the Muntinlupa Development Fund.

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4 senators deny having presidential aspirations

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

WHO, ME? OF COURSE NOT.

Four senators strongly suspected of harboring secret ambitions to run for President in 2010 yesterday brushed off a challenge from Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago that presidential aspirants declare their intention now so people will know and understand how they stand on the Charter change debate.

Though Santiago did not name the four senators with such plans, it is believed that Senators Manuel Villar, Ralph Recto, Manuel Roxas and Francis Pangilinan have been largely using their tenure at the Senate as preparation for higher office.

"Are we still going to have a President in 2010?" Villar shot back when asked if he was aiming for Malacañang in 2010.

With the administration and the majority coalition in Congress bent on a shift to a parliamentary system through a constitutional amendment, the presidential elections in 2010 may just not happen.

In any case, Villar, the country's wealthiest senator with a net worth of P760 million in 2005, said he had no plans to run for President and was only thinking of getting reelected in 2007, "if the Senate still exists" next year.

It would be "useless" for presidential aspirants to declare now because nobody knows what would happen in the political landscape in the next few years, he said.

Recto, the second richest senator after Villar, categorically said he would not run for President.

"I have no interest whatsoever. Anything higher than this [Senate] is a gift of [God's] grace. You can possibly plan up to the Senate but anything higher, you cannot plan," said the former Batangas congressman who is married to the popular movie star cum politician Vilma Santos, the mayor of Lipa City.

"My grandpa Don Claro could have been a

great President. He was definitely a more intellectual person than I am and so is my father. But if the two of them did not become President, how much more can I?" he said.

Recto is the grandson of the eminent nationalist and senator Claro M. Recto, whose presidential candidacy was frustrated in 1957, and the son of Rafael Recto, a former assemblyman in the Marcos-era Batasan Pambansa.

Roxas, scion of the wealthy Roxas-Araneta clan, described the prospect of running for President in 2010 as a "nightmare."

A former congressman and trade secretary, Roxas made history as the candidate to have obtained the highest votes in any Philippine election. He got more than 19 million votes when he ran for the Senate in 2004.

Pangilinan quipped that he would run for president... "of Frankie's Parents-Teachers Association." Frankie is his eldest daughter with another popular movie star Sharon Cuneta.

"We aren't suffering from a shortage of overly ambitious politicians and so I prefer not to add to the excess supply," Pangilinan said.

Though they do not see the shift to a parliamentary system as happening anytime soon, Villar and Recto have made plans to run for parliament in their old districts in Las Piñas and Batangas, respectively.

But the shift to a parliamentary system would be an "uphill battle" for its advocates, said Recto who wants to run for reelection in 2007 but figures it would cost a lot of money.

He said running for MP (member of parliament) would be cheaper and easier by comparison.

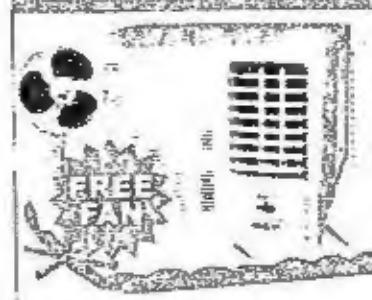
"I think I can easily win in my district," he said.

Recto, who declared a net worth of P267.3 million, explained that it was his wife's money, not his.

"It's my wife who is rich. She has many commercials, if you notice," he said.

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WCARF009	0.75	11.7	13x9x18	P 13,548	P 14,078	P 14,536		WCONT009	0.75	10.3	13x10x18	P 12,397	P 12,910	P 13,443
WCARF011	1	10.5	13x9x24	P 14,678	P 15,575	P 16,216		WCONT010	1	10.5	13x10x24	P 13,504	P 14,171	P 14,883
WCARF012	1.25	11.2	13x9x24	P 15,295	P 16,554	P 17,321		WCONT011	1.25	11.2	15x23x27	P 14,576	P 15,299	P 16,149
WCARF014	1.5	11.2	13x26x27	P 17,230	P 18,081	P 19,265		WCONT014	1.5	11.2	15x23x27	P 16,164	P 16,831	P 17,799
WCARF015	2	10.5	13x26x29	P 21,587	P 22,104	P 23,052		WCONT019	2	10.5	17x26x29	P 20,500	P 21,315	P 22,140
WCARF016	2.5	9.2	17x26x29	P 24,672	P 25,438	P 26,215		WCONT024	2.5	9.2	17x26x29	P 23,003		P 25,882

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Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 2	0459-802-7230	0459-802-7230	Days	0441-466-7649	0441-466-7649	Days	030-334-665328	030-334-665328	Days	041-1452	041-1452	Days	049-534-4869619	049-534-4869619	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 3	0459-545-7034	0459-545-7034	Days	0461-418-11487100	0461-418-11487100	Days	072-0576977	072-0576977	Days	041-795-3271	041-795-3271	Days	035-12081223	035-12081223	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 4	0461-278-1004	0461-278-1004	Days	036-75987680	036-75987680	Days	018-5-653	018-5-653	Days	049-522-8242	049-522-8242	Days	049-565-12081223	049-565-12081223	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 5	0459-411-4511	0459-411-4511	Days	0461-418-11484	0461-418-11484	Days	072-18371899	072-18371899	Days	033-76057826	033-76057826	Days	049-57871968	049-57871968	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 6	0461-418-11482	0461-418-11482	Days	059-471-062038	059-471-062038	Days	041-464-1853	041-464-1853	Days	041-50336193	041-50336193	Days	049-565-12081223	049-565-12081223	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 7	0461-418-11483	0461-418-11483	Days	0461-471-062038	0461-471-062038	Days	041-464-1853	041-464-1853	Days	041-50336193	041-50336193	Days	049-565-12081223	049-565-12081223	Days

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Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 2	0459-802-7230	0459-802-7230	Days	0441-466-7649	0441-466-7649	Days	030-334-665328	030-334-665328	Days	041-1452	041-1452	Days	033-1363654	033-1363654	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 3	0459-545-7034	0459-545-7034	Days	0461-418-11487100	0461-418-11487100	Days	072-0576977	072-0576977	Days	041-795-3271	041-795-3271	Days	035-12081223	035-12081223	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 4	0461-278-1004	0461-278-1004	Days	036-75987680	036-75987680	Days	018-5-653	018-5-653	Days	033-76057826	033-76057826	Days	049-57871968	049-57871968	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 5	0459-411-4511	0459-411-4511	Days	0461-418-11484	0461-418-11484	Days	072-18371899	072-18371899	Days	041-464-1853	041-464-1853	Days	033-1363654	033-1363654	Days
Antipolo 049-8008900	Carries 6	0461-418-11482	0461-418-11482	Days	059-471-062038	059-471-062038	Days	041-464-1853	041-464-1853	Days	041-50336193					

Killings alarm international group

From page A1

ported in 2005.

"A climate of impunity shielding the perpetrators of such killings deepened as ineffective investigations failed to lead to the prosecution of those responsible. In many cases witnesses were reportedly too frightened to testify."

The release of the report comes in the wake of the statement of the Commission on Human Rights that the Arroyo administration was accountable for the killing of activists and journalists, whether or not persons in authority were responsible.

Most at risk

The AI report said that apart from suspected members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, "those most at risk included members of legal leftist political parties, including Bayan Muna and Anakpawis, other human rights and community activists, priests, church workers and lawyers regarded by the authorities as sympathetic to the broader communist movement."

It observed that the military's labeling of activists in legal organizations as communists was one of the factors in the rise of the number of assassinations: "Increased killings in particular provinces were reportedly linked to the public labeling of leftist groups as NPA front organizations by local AFP commanders."

Palparan

Asked if the Arroyo administration might be encouraging more extrajudicial killings in the countryside with Maj. Gen. Jovito



GRIM STATISTICS on human rights abuses not only in the Philippines but also in Britain and the United States are contained in the Amnesty International 2006 report, which was presented to the media in Quezon City on Tuesday.

JOAN BONDOC

Palparan's recent promotion, the AI's Soto said: "Yes, I can only agree with that."

She said that despite the killing of leftist activists in Palparan's areas of jurisdiction, "you see the government giving support to him."

"This is an indication that the government is not serious in resolving these cases," she said.

Leftist groups have accused Palparan, commanding officer of Army troops in Central Luzon, of involvement in the killing of sus-

pected rebels wherever he is assigned.

Palparan recently called for the reimposition of the antisubversion law to speed up the government's counterinsurgency campaign.

Helping the CHR

He said CPP leaders had managed to infiltrate certain party-list groups that were "legal" but were involved in "illegal activities."

Soto said Amnesty International would assist the CHR in

bringing the Philippine situation to the attention of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"Perhaps they can send a special rapporteur ... What we'll do is keep on writing [letters to the UNHRC] until the human rights violations in the country stop," she said.

Soto also noted that the CHR had become outspoken on the human rights situation in the country: "Before, the CHR would not make statements on

the government's human rights record. Now, [it's] making a strong statement."

On Monday, CHR Chair Purificacion Quisumbing said the government was answerable for all the unsolved killings of activists.

She said it was the government's responsibility to ensure the people's right to life, property, privacy, security of homes and public order.

Job for PNP

But the military and police yesterday refused to take responsibility for the unabated killings.

"Well, in the first place this is the job of the Philippine National Police. These are criminal acts that fall under the jurisdiction of the PNP," said AFP Public Information Office chief Col. Tristan Kisso.

He added: "If there are people within our ranks who would be charged, we are ready to surrender them to the [PNP] for investigation."

"If we have a way of knowing [the perpetrators], we will help in resolving this problem as soon as possible."

PNP Director Emmanuel Carta, officer in charge of Task Force Usig which was formed to solve the killings, said it was exerting its "best efforts."

Carta said it was "unfair" to say that the PNP was not doing enough regarding the killings.

"There are other pillars of the criminal justice system. I don't think we should blame each other. We should work hard on this," Carta said.

"We are exerting our best efforts to gather evidence ... But what we need is for witnesses to come out," he said.

Carta said the task force was concentrating on its assigned job because no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo had given instructions to its head, PNP Deputy Director General Avelino Razon Jr.

Razon, the deputy police chief for operations, left on Monday on a five-day official trip to Britain.

Assistance

Kison said the AFP was assisting Task Force Usig "in the form of intelligence sharing" to identify the killers.

"But who will we charge?" he said.

The AFP had earlier claimed that the fallen militants were likely killed by their comrades. "Well, we have maintained that this could be part of a purge by the other side," Kison said.

Asked if the military was undertaking a crackdown on perceived enemies of the state, he said: "Well, our crackdown would always be on the maintenance of peace and stability. Whether or not they are on the CPP-NPA side or the political opposition side, for as long as they are threats to peace and stability we will take the necessary action."

Renato Reyes Jr., secretary general of the militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, yesterday challenged the PNP to relieve the police commanders in areas where activists or journalists had been killed.

'Sherpas for truth'

THE MILITANT FISHERFOLK group Pamalakaya said that along with the farmers' alliance Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, it would present to the Vatican's new ambassador to the Philippines the 601 cases of extrajudicial killings allegedly perpetrated by the military, police or their hired assassins from Jan. 21, 2001, to May 22, 2006.

Archbishop Fernando Filoni "deserves the truth and nothing but the truth," Pamalakaya national chair Fernando Hicap said in a statement sent to the Inquirer.

"So we are willing to act as his Sherpas for truth. We will keep him posted and we will provide him alternative sources and viewpoints on current social issues," it said.

Pamalakaya and the KMP were apparently encouraged by Filoni's earlier statement that it was the Church's duty to speak out on issues.

"He is an open-minded and progressive leader of the Church and we are confident he will listen to us," said KMP secretary general Danilo Ramos. Christian Esguerra

"They do that for our theft cases. They should all the more do so [where] political killings [are involved]," he said.

Test case

At the House, Deputy Minority Leader and Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo said the Arroyo administration should heed CHR Chair Quisumbing's call for government accountability in all political killings.

Ocampo said the killing of activists, mostly members of Bayan Muna, and the filing of fabricated charges against himself and the other party-list representatives collectively known as the "Batasan 5" showed that "the Left is being used as a test case on how to silence the entire nation whose overwhelming majority seeks the President's ouster."

He pointed out that the government was bound to uphold and protect the rights and freedoms of the people under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international human rights instruments and conventions that the Philippines had signed.

And yet, he said, "rabid anti-Left government, military and police officials have maliciously dubbed dissenters and activists as enemies of the state in a vain attempt to justify the continuing political killings."

According to Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano, his squads are now operating in Metro Manila and other major urban centers as part of the counterinsurgency program.

"This annihilation campaign is clearly anchored in the Armed Forces' internal security operation plan Bantay Laya," Mariano said.

He said Bantay Laya had "a two-pronged target: The organized masses in the countryside and the legal progressive movement in the cities."

Candidates for sainthood

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said Quisumbing would have to "be careful in making general statements" about the killings.

"The CHR, I think, always thinks that all the leftist people are candidates for sainthood, and that the government is always wrong," Gonzalez said in a phone interview.

"I think the CHR should be more [open-minded] in [its] assessment ... So many people are killed not because of their being leftist or rightist or media ... " he said.

Gonzalez reiterated his challenge to the CHR, leftist groups and international organizations to help the government get to the bottom of the communist purges of the 1980s.

"Why don't we work together to find out who was responsible for the common graves in Quezon? Who did it and why was it done?" he said, adding:

"Human rights groups should look into these things. We are criticized abroad for these killings. The government is being blamed, but what about their [the leftists'] own killings?" With reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Armand N. Nocum and Christian V. Esguerra

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Cops find bike, gear of Palawan broadcaster's killers

By Marion Ramos
and Jofelle R. Tesorio
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—The motorcycle and other items believed used by the killers of the most popular broadcaster in Palawan have been found, the regional director of the Mimaropa police said yesterday.

Chief Supt. Delfin Genio said the recovered items included a blue motorcycle, a blue collared shirt, black jogging pants, a cap, a towel and two bullets for a .45-cal. pistol.

He said the items could have belonged to the killers of Fernando "Dong" Batul, a hard-hitting

commentator on local radio dyPR, on Monday morning in Puerto Princesa City.

Genio quoted an informer of the National Bureau of Investigation in Puerto Princesa as saying that "a group of civilians was trying to get hold" of some items found near a lumber yard along Malvar Street.

He said NBI and police agents went to the area and found the items scattered there.

Reward

A former vice mayor of the city, Batul, the 79th journalist killed since the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, was on his way to the radio station to host his "Bastionero" program when he was waylaid.

Genio said the reward for information leading to the arrest of Batul's killers was raised to P1 million with the provincial government of Palawan, through Gov. Joel Reyes, putting up P500,000 yesterday.

Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn had earlier offered the same amount for the quick resolution of the killing.

Genio said the P1-million reward would be a boost to police efforts to find the killers.

"Hopefully, the bounty will motivate witnesses to come out and cooperate with our investigators," he told the Inquirer.

Genio said his team already had a witness who was standing a few feet from where Batul was

ambushed.

He called on Batul's friends and relatives as well as local residents to cooperate with police investigators.

Artist's sketch

In Puerto Princesa, police released an artist's sketch of one of the killers.

Gen. Isidro Lapeña, who had been assigned by Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lombard to look into the case, said copies of the sketch based on an eyewitness account would be issued shortly to the media.

Lapeña said he had met with the management of dyPR station

and turned over financial assistance in behalf of the PNP to the mother and siblings of Batul, who would have turned 37 today.

The provincial government condemned the brutal killing, saying it was an attack on press freedom as well as on Palawan.

Motive

"It was scary because we knew the reason he was killed—to silence him forever," said Vice Gov. David Ponce de Leon.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Palawan Community and Media Council and Palawan NGO Network Inc. also issued statements condemning the killing of the broadcaster.



BATUL: Most popular broadcaster in Palawan

Government to allow journalists to bear arms

From page A1

sure of the reason. There are media men killed in drinking sprees or because of a woman. So what does that have to do with their work?" he said.

Doing its best

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said he was open to the proposal to arm journalists, on condition that they underwent proper training and obtained the required permits.

But he said the administration would not take responsibility for the rash of killings involving journalists and activists because it had done its best to prevent more murders and solve pending cases.

"We're not satisfied [with our record] and we prefer that the culprits be brought to justice and put behind bars," Bunye said at a briefing.

"But we have to work together instead of blaming one another. The citizenry will have to cooperate with the police and give proper information so cases will be solved fast," he said.

Bunye was reacting to the statement on Monday by Commission on Human Rights Chair Purificacion Quisumbing that the government should be held accountable for the extrajudicial killings that had occurred under the watch of President Macapagal-Arroyo. (See related story on Page A1.)

"Our President upholds human rights and she does not condone any violations. The President has come out very strongly in condemning such violations, and has ordered authorities to step up their investigation on the series of killings," he said.

Reminded that this was Ms. Arroyo's same response in the past to



ROTTING TOMATOES from Southern Tagalog militants who earlier picketed Camp Aguinaldo are thrown at the office of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency in Quezon City to protest the sharp rise in the killings of militants and journalists.

RAPPY LERMA

the public alarm over the growing number of extrajudicial killings, Bunye said: "These cases are being filed, and as long as perpetrators are identified, they are filed in court. It just so happens that for some cases, the culprits are still at large. That's why we are appealing for assistance to bring the culprits to justice."

Press freedom fund

Bunye said he would look into the press freedom fund established by Ms. Arroyo last year to determine whether it had been used to achieve its purpose of giving incentives to informants and providing relief to relatives of the victims.

He stressed that the administration did not relish the Philippines being called the most dan-

gerous place for journalists after war-torn Iraq.

"We hope that we will be able to get the cooperation of everyone so the situation will improve," Bunye said, adding:

"Things would look brighter if the solution of cases would be speeded up. We are appealing for the cooperation of everyone because we need information to push through with the investigations, information that only the citizenry can provide."

Gonzalez also said the government had "solved almost all the media killings, and we have charged as [many people] as [the cases] we have solved."

"The government has not been

releasable for journalists after

the media," he said.

But he said members of the media "should police their own ranks."

He added: "The problem is there are many 'hao siao' reporters. I experienced that in Congress before."

"There were many media men who were not allowed to join their colleagues in the press office because they were not legitimate media men. They only asked for money."

Abnormal series

Gonzalez represented Iloilo in Congress for three terms.

At the Bulong Pulungan forum, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno noted that despite the creation of Task Force Usig to go after the per-

petrators, the killings continued.

"I felt it constituted an abnormal series of occurrences. A murder was happening almost every day since the task force was created," Puno said.

"We're going to examine what form of protection we can give to journalists," he said, adding that he would discuss with representatives of media groups "matters concerning enforcement of laws and prosecution of suspects, the protection of journalists and the prevention of harm to them."

He said he would likewise meet with the CHR to talk about ways and means to ensure that the human rights of activists and journalists were protected.

"We do not condone extrajudicial killings," Puno said.

He also said the police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group and the National Bureau of Investigation would handle the probe into the killing of broadcaster Fernando "Dong" Batul the other day in Palawan. (See story at the top of this page.)

Eyewitnesses

Puno stressed the importance of the participation of the community, especially the eyewitnesses, in solving the killings.

"Investigators are hard put to solve any crime unless people help. We're trying to [create] a climate where witnesses can feel safe," he said.

He also said the participation of civic groups and business organizations in crime prevention was crucial, and added that this was why he had decided to seek their help in manning 22 checkpoints in Metro Manila.

The checkpoints are where permanent police outposts will be set up to inspect vehicles and ensure public order.

There will also be mobile checkpoints to go after suspicious vehicles.

Civic groups

Puno said in a statement that he would seek the assistance of groups like the Rotary Club, Kiwanis and Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce in carrying out crime prevention programs.

He said that it was important for the public to have confidence when approaching police officials at checkpoints and checkpoints, and that the presence of civic group members would be reassuring. With a report from Leila B. Salaverria

ment to be crafted" before criticizing it. Besides, he said, the commission would have to deliberate on the finished product before it would be submitted to the courts for final approval.

House decision

The PCCG chair also said he would leave the decision to abolish

ish the PCCG "to the statesmanship of the House of Representatives and the Senate."

"We have a mandate. If it is

abolished, how can we accomplish it? But what can we do? That's their [lawmakers'] call," Sabio said.

Lawmakers and other parties

had called for the abolition of the

PCCG for two reasons: It was ineffective in going after ill-gotten wealth cases and its commissioners were allegedly taking advantage of their positions to enrich themselves and to negotiate a deal with the Marcoses. Recently, some senators even called for a zero budget for the PCCG.

"The effect of that (zero budget) is that it is giving us a responsibility but not enough equipment to carry this out. It's as simple as that. But we will do our best. For as long as I am here, I will pursue these [ill-gotten wealth] cases," Sabio said.

He added that the PCCG would prefer to enter into deals with the Marcoses and their cronies rather than let litigation drag on.

Steal now, (no) pay later

Abcede also allayed fears that a settlement with the Marcoses would encourage other government officials to steal now and seek a compromise with the government later.

"It doesn't mean we are encouraging future leaders to commit acts inimical to government. It's like saying the government is wrong in negotiating with the MILF and the communist rebels. Is it to encourage them to commit more acts of terrorism? We don't want that," he said.

On accusations that the money recovered from the Marcoses would be used to fund Charter change, Abcede said proponents of this argument "are all sound and fury and signify nothing."

"Our mandate is to recover the ill-gotten wealth and remit this to the national treasury for CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program). Maybe they (critics) should monitor where the money goes. But don't look at us. They are barking up the wrong tree," he said.

Asked to comment on various calls for the resignation of Sabio and the other PCCG commissioners, Abcede said: "If their reasons are valid, why not? Otherwise the President will have to decide."

ABC EDE: Friends, not enemies.

SABIO: Concessions for recovery

I just wanted to have fun, says Abcede

ment to be crafted" before criticizing it. Besides, he said, the commission would have to deliberate on the finished product before it would be submitted to the courts for final approval.

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Abcede also allayed fears that a

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NorthRail head admits Joe de V role in project

By TJ Burgonio

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA HOSTED MEETINGS between government officials and representatives of the Chinese Embassy on the long-delayed and controversial \$503-million Northrail transit system at his home in Makati at least two times early this year.

Jose Cortes, president of the North Luzon Railway Corp. (Northrail), admitted this much yesterday when he appeared for the first time before the Senate, nearly eight months after snubbing its inquiry into the controversial project.

By his admission, Cortes bolstered speculation that De Venecia had played a key role in the contract between Northrail and the China National Machinery and Equipment Corp. Group (CNMEG) to build the project.

But he was quick to say the Speaker was not involved in the negotiations. Cortes said De Venecia merely "opened the doors" for the government to obtain funds from the Chinese government for the Northrail and other projects.

The 32-km railway project, which promises fast, cheap travel for thousands of commuters across congested areas from Caloocan City to Malolos, Bulacan, has been bedeviled by false starts, and alleged anomalies.

At the Senate budget hearings, Cortes admitted he, Finance Secretary Peter Pavila, other department heads and Philippine National Railway officials met twice with Chinese embassy officials at De Venecia's residence at Dasmarinas Village.

The meetings came two years after Northrail and CNMEG signed the contract in December 2003. Also present at the meetings was Chinese businessman William Go.

Opposition Sen. Sergio Osmeña III said he had information the project was the "baby" of De Venecia and wanted to know "why do we need a middle-man for a government to government project?"

Opening doors

"We need JDV to open the doors," Cortes replied.

Cortes told reporters later that De Venecia simply helped the administration obtain funds from the Chinese government.

"The Speaker was never involved in the negotiations at all. All I was referring to was the fact that he opened the door to our ability to get funding facility, not only for Northrail, but for the other projects that we have in the Philippines," he said. "He provided the venue."

Apart from the railway project, the other beneficiaries of Chinese funding were the Nonoc mining project in Surigao del Norte and other agriculture-based projects, he said. The Chinese government has allotted \$6-billion fund to protect its investments in the country.

Under questioning by Senate President Franklin Drilon, who initiated a hearing into the Northrail project last year, Cortes admitted that Northrail had no franchise to build and operate a railway.

But this would be remedied by the establishment of a joint venture between Northrail and the PNR, Cortes said, conceding, however, that PNR's franchise was not transferrable.

"We are not against the project. We just don't want the government to be saddled with another Piatco. We must straighten this out," said Drilon, referring to the mothballed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal III.

In a study released in August last year, the University of the Philippines Law Center claimed the contract between Northrail and CNMEG was "unlawful" because it skipped public bidding.

For this and other "questionable terms," the contract should be annulled, and if warranted, criminal, civil and administrative charges should be filed against concerned public and private individuals, the law center recommended.

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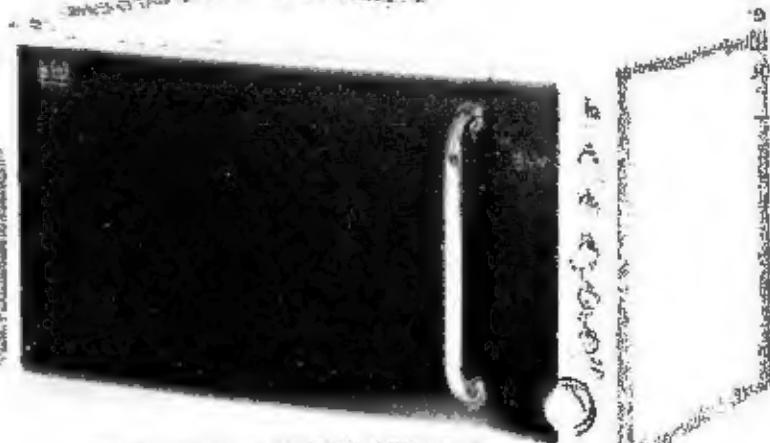
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Cha-cha faceoff: House, Senate panels to meet

By Michael Lim Ubac

A 19-MAN CONTINGENT FROM the House of Representatives will face off with a panel of senators tonight at the Manila Polo Club in an effort to reach agreement on how to go about Charter change.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said yesterday the House contingent

would be meeting with the senators with an "open mind and [in] good faith."

Up for discussion are the proposed coming together of both chambers to amend the 1987 Constitution, the shift to parliamentary system, the abolition of the Senate to pave the way for a unicameral parliament, the manner of voting,

among other topics.

"We will discuss everything that concerns Cha-cha," said Rep. Constantino Jaraula, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, who formed the House contingent to be composed of 15 pro-administration lawmakers and four members of the minority.

A disgruntled administration congressman, however, was quick to brand the House-Senate dialogue a pact with "the devil."

Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagay, a committee vice chair, expressed skepticism the dialogue would produce "tangible results."

"How come we dialogue with the devil?" he said. "The Senate will not back an inch."

Cagay said the dialogue "would lead nowhere."

"The dialogue is a sure way to kill Cha-cha. Senators have been against the constituent assembly. My colleagues in the House should not fall into the trap set by the senators to use the dialogue to kill Cha-cha," Cagay said.

He urged the House instead to focus on the people's initiative to amend the Constitution, which he said had a greater chance of prospering.

The Senate, for its part, is not keen on Charter change but agreed to the dialogue with the House to thresh out their differences.

During a two-hour meeting of the House committee on constitutional amendments yesterday, Jaraula said that whatever would be agreed upon during the dialogue would only be recommended to both chambers of Congress.

And in line with Speaker De Venecia's "massage diplo-

cy"—the House's effort to restore "formal diplomatic relations" with the largely anti-Cha-cha Senate—the committee suspended deliberations on House Resolution No. 1230 (the draft amendments to the Constitution) to hear the senators' inputs first.

"Lawmakers cannot debate till kingdom come," said Jaraula, who was optimistic the senators would cooperate with the House push for a shift to a parliamentary system of government.

The House contingent is composed of, among others, Jaraula, Antonio Cuenco, Luis Villafuerte, Ezequiel Javier, Mauricio Domogan, Salacuib Baterina, Roquito Abian, Mary Ann Susano, Ulran Joaquin, Hermilando Mandanas, Victoria Reyes and Herminia Ramiro, and for the minority Darlene Antonino-Custodio and Roilo Golez.

Before the meeting adjourned, Jaraula read a letter from the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, revision of codes and laws informing the House that they were "ready to host and receive the House contingent for an open dialogue on the issues surrounding the proposed Charter change."

Jaraula stressed that while they were meeting with the senators, the "House will defend its stand for a shift from the current unitary bicameral presidential form of government to a unicameral parliamentary form at the soonest practicable time."

Villafuerte said Senate President Franklin Drilon had averred that the senators had "no fundamental objections to Charter change but they disagreed with the mode by which it would be carried out."

Pre-need firms back Pacific rehab program

PRE-NEED PLAN HOLDERS OF VARIOUS pre-need companies yesterday supported the decision of the Makati Regional Trial Court (RTC) for the rehabilitation of the ailing pre-need company, Pacific Plans Inc. (PPI).

In a statement, the Coordinating Alliance for Reform and Empowerment in the Pre-need Industry (CARE Pre-need), with 8,000 pre-need plan holders, described the court's decision as a reasonable, credible and workable solution to the problem of open-ended education plans, which PPI has stopped selling since the early '90s. This was long before the 2002 Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) order to stop the sale of this type of educational plan.

David Diwa Jr., the group's president, said the court-approved plan to resuscitate PPI would allow the company to continue its operations, improve its financial standing and help revive the pre-need industry.

This would also provide for a continuing tuition support for open-ended plan holders up to school year 2009-10.

He urged the SEC to grant PPI dealers' license and securities so they could sell fixed value pension plans, education plans and memorial plans.

"We are for the rehabilitation, not the demolition of PPI," Diwa said.

At the same time, Alfredo J. Non, president of PPI said that he was closely consulting and coordinating with Diwa as part of

Care Pre-need and PPI's mutually-agreed policy to save and support the pre-need industry and protect the plan holders' interest.

Diwa cited PPI for responding to the need of plan holders for continued tuition fee support. Unlike other pre-need firms, PPI had given tuition fee support last school year that totaled P591 million.

"This gesture has given PPI's open-ended plan holders relief during these difficult times and has rekindled the trust and confidence that exist between PPI and its plan holders," he said.

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Suspect in Kintanar, Tabara slays eyed as state witness

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE MILITARY IS CONSIDERING TURNING a captured suspect in the killing of communist leaders Arturo Tabara and Romulo Kintanar into a state witness.

"He is very cooperative. He is willing to help in locating the other members of his group," said Col. Tristan Kison, Armed Forces of the Philippines public information chief, of Delfin de Guzman, alleged Communist Party of the Philippines official who admitted involvement in the killing of the two.

De Guzman had supplied the military with the identities of his cohorts, Kison said.

He said it was "possible" De Guzman would be used as a state witness after the rest of the hit squad that killed Tabara and Kintanar were captured and charged in court.

"That depends but, yes, that's possible... If his help would be favorable to us, why would we not use him?" Kison said.

The military said De Guzman, 38, who used the alias Rafael Cruz, was acting secretary of the CPP regional party committee in Central Luzon as well as secretary of the Bulacan party committee.

He was arrested at his house in Norzagaray, Bulacan, by a joint military and police team on May 11. He was presented to the media on May 22.

But the CPP has disowned De Guzman.

"As far as we know, he is neither the CPP secretary in Bulacan nor is he a member of any NPA unit. We do not have a clue as to the identity of this man," said party spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal in a statement.

He said CPP officials in Central Luzon told him yesterday that all party and NPA officials and

Drug arrest of ex-officers alarms PAF

By Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE (PAF) ADMITTED yesterday that the recent arrest of two of its retired commissioned officers for alleged drug use was "quite alarming."

But PAF spokesperson Major Augusto dela Pena said the military service implemented stringent measures to ensure that its pilots and enlisted personnel were drug-free.

"Medyo alarming kung tutulisan (It's a bit alarming) but we have measures to weed out [those taking drugs]—no pun intended," dela Pena told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Retired Lt. Col. Alex Hernandez and retired Major Josefino Gabor, both 45, were among the eight men that agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) caught allegedly snuffing shabu in a Paranaque City home last week.

Two other suspects were policemen. One was Gabor's brother, Chief Inspector Robert Gabor, 48, assigned at the Philippine National Police Holding Center in Camp Crame.

Australia donates forensic equipment

AUSTRALIA WILL give the Philippines some P200 million worth of high-tech forensic equipment to boost its ability to investigate terror attacks, a police general said yesterday.

Ernesto Belen, head of the Philippine National Police's crime laboratory, said five machines used for chemical analysis of explosives were expected to arrive in Manila by August as part of a \$10-million counterterrorism assistance package from Australia.

Australia has also donated nearly \$130 million in regional counterterrorism assistance. Reuters

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Palace unfazed by new impeachment move

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID IT was not at all concerned about the plan of the minority in the House of Representatives to file a second impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo since they were divided on the issue.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said "quite a number" of opposition members of the House were "hesitant" to sign the complaint.

"The first impeachment bid was shot down before it got to first base and it is understandable that the opposition will not have the will and determination to pursue a second round," said Bunye in a briefing.

The opposition mounted a spirited

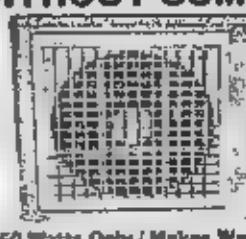
campaign to impeach the President last year following the public's outcry over the "Hello Gato" scandal which strongly suggested the President had cheated in the 2004 elections.

The opposition needed to get 79 of the 236 members to sign the impeachment complaint to send it to the

Senate for trial but it could only muster 52 signatures.

"Impeachment is a lost cause not only because it lacks popular support; it has no legal leg to stand on. It has lost its relevance in the face of increasing political and economic stability," Bunye said. Gil G. Cabacungan Jr.

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BIR exceeds excise tax target in 1st 4 months

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE generated a total of P18.52 billion in excise tax collections from January to April this year, exceeding its target of P17.05 billion for the four-month period.

For the month of April, the BIR said it also surpassed its excise target collection of P4,024 million by eight percent or P316,000 contrary to a newspaper report that there was a shortfall.

Collection from alcohol and tobacco products amounted to P3.31 billion or an excess of P198 million over its P3.11 billion goal.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag denied that the bureau's monthly take from excise sources went down despite higher tax

rates on sin products.

The excise tax is imposed on goods manufactured in or imported into the country for domestic sale or consumption. It is required to be paid by a manufacturer/producer before removal of domestic products from the place of production.

The BIR chief came under fire following the dismal performance of the revenue agency in April.

Top officials of the House Committee on Ways and Means will meet today with their Senate counterparts to discuss possible refinements in the BIR operations and collection target.

The Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) will convene to review

BIR's performance, and to tackle such issues as the agency's failure to achieve its collection target thus far.

But Rep. Jesli Lapus, Ways and Means Committee Chair and Vice Chair Rep. Ezequiel Javier expressed support for Buñag amid criticism over the BIR's failure to achieve its collection target for the first four months of the year.

Both congressmen were confident that the BIR under Buñag's leadership would be able to overhaul its collection deficit and achieve its total collection target of P546.9 billion for the year.

They said the BIR needed all the public's support considering the whopping 23.42 percent increase in its collection target over last year, even as they tasked the agency to jump-start its cam-

paign against tax evasion and plug other revenues leakages, pursuant to the directive of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Bir noted that the BIR's total collections as of April of P206.3 billion were still P33.1 billion or 19.1 percent more than last year.

Revenues collected in April, the month for personal income tax filing, reached P71.4 billion, or 13 percent higher than the same period last year.

But the Department of Finance noted that the BIR incurred a P7.2 billion shortfall in April based on its target of P78.6 billion.

The BIR blamed the April shortfall on the increase in the use of withholding tax credits to offset tax payments, higher utilization of tax credit certificates,

lower corporate income tax payments since many firms remitted the bulk of their payments in the first three quarters of 2005, and increase in the use of minimum corporate income tax payments for loss years to avoid their expiration.

"The one-month collection shortfall in April could be explained, since collection target refinements are in order due to higher non-cash revenues which are nonetheless still revenues," said Lapus.

However, Lapus, remained confident the BIR would still achieve its second quarter collection target of P189.8 billion.

Javier also expressed confidence that Buñag could achieve BIR's ambitious collection targets for the year.



BUNAG

IBM offers jobs to all iACADEMY graduates

IBM forecasted a bright future for all iACADEMY graduates as the company offered job opportunities for all of them during the school's 1st commencement exercises last May 13, 2006 held at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium at the RCBC Plaza in Makati City.

The good news was delivered by no less than IBM Philippines' President and General Manager, Mr. Joaquin E. Quintos IV who graced the event as the Guest of Honor and Commencement Exercises Speaker.

Quintos' speech focused on innovation in the area related to both individual and enterprise dynamics. He stated that businesses nowadays depend on contributions of individuals. More and more companies are searching for individuals who are equipped with the "right skills" required by the industry to empower their enterprise.

These ideas of innovation and honing individuals with the appropriate skills are the same forces that motivated the partnership between iACADEMY and IBM.

"We at IBM are very honored to be partners with iACADEMY, as we strive to deliver high quality IBM-powered education to the general public. We are pleased the partnership between iACADEMY and IBM has now produced its initial results and we look forward to a long and stronger partnership moving forward," Quintos stated.

Furthermore, Quintos commended, "This IBM-powered iACADEMY program hits the 'sweet spot' of the industry requirement."

Aside from the fact that iACADEMY students get actual & large-scale projects and full-time six to seven months internship with world-class companies such as Smart Communications Inc., and Nestlé Philippines, Incorporated to name a few, with IBM-powered courses offered by iACADEMY, all students get certified by IBM even before they graduate, thus, giving Quintos the confidence to recommend the iACADEMY graduates to apply at IBM.

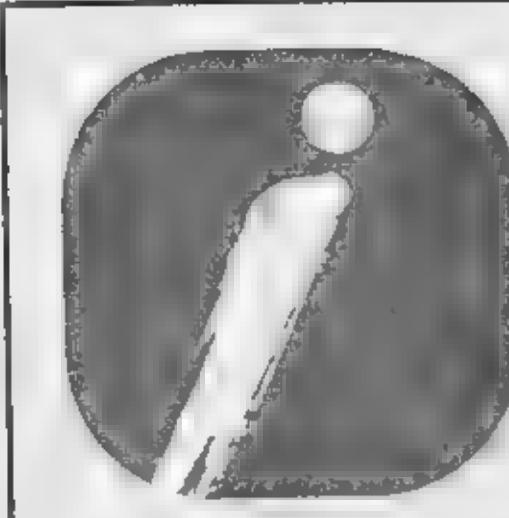
The students, parents, guests, and the iACADEMY staff present during the commencement exercises loudly applauded as Quintos offered job openings at IBM to all iACADEMY graduates as a boost to those who would like to build a strong career in Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Parents could not help but beam with pride and satisfaction for seeing their sons and daughters graduate from a school offering a work-directed program.

As for Mr. Mitch Andaya, the Dean and COO of iACADEMY, his passionate speech did not only inspire the new graduates but also welled up emotions as he reminisced bits of the four years he shared with the first batch of iACADEMY students.

Hon. Teodoro Locsin, Jr. and Mr. Tomas Lopez, members of iACADEMY Board of Governors who were present, as well as Mr. Monica Jacob, the President and CEO of iACADEMY, were also grateful for the trust that the parents and students gave iACADEMY for the past years.

Stormy weather loomed overhead as they left the Carlos P. Romulo auditorium. Nevertheless, the exhilarated and inspired graduates seemed undaunted especially because great opportunities await them, not to mention career options in IBM, for a start.

For parents who would like to have their children avail of a world-class, work-directed and IBM-powered education, you may inquire at iACADEMY at 891-3727 or 891-3865. You may also visit them at the 3/F Phil. First Bldg., 6764 Ayala Ave., Makati City.



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Coalition formed to fight foreign drug companies

By Christian V. Esguerra

FED UP WITH THE HIGH COST OF MEDICINE in the country, reportedly the second most expensive in Asia after Japan, several groups of consumers, health workers and clergymen have formed a coalition with the Department of Health to help break the multinational companies' stranglehold on the local pharmaceutical industry.

Officials of the coalition, called Ayo na Gamot sa Abot-Kayang Presyo (Agap), said breaking such dominance, particularly through legislation, would help lower the local cost of medicine.

The coalition binds the Free Trade Alliance (FTA), Third World Network, Citizens Alliance for Consumer Power, Association of Barangay Health Workers-NCR, and the Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Empowerment.

It's the broadest effort so far to combat the scourge of high-priced medicines in the country, former senator and FTA convenor Wigberto Tañada told reporters after the coalition's launching at the Philippine General Hospital yesterday.

"The battle is quite difficult because the enemies are very powerful," he said, referring to multinational drug companies which purportedly control 70 percent of the local pharmaceutical industry. "They have great influence in and out of the government."

Optimistic

But Agap members were optimistic, especially after getting the support of Sen. Mar Roxas, who authored a bill seeking amendments to the Intellectual Property Code. Health Undersecretary Alex Padilla, the Bureau of Food and Drugs, and the Philippine International Trading Corp.

"This alliance is an important first step in achieving our dream of low-priced medicines in the country," Roxas said.

The coalition hopes that the Roxas bill would become a law since it takes into account "flexibilities" in the Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement.

At present, the country is saddled by restrictions against the importation of medicines which Agap hopes would provide healthy competition to multinational companies.

Roxas said the idea was to ensure that local prices were reasonable, meaning at par with the rates in other countries.

In its declaration, Agap said it wants full implementation of the Generics Act of 1998 whose main objective was to provide the public with cheaper alternatives without sacrificing quality associated with branded medicines.

A table provided by the Citizens Alliance for Consumer Power showed noticeable discrepancies in the prices of branded and generic medicines.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, May 24, 2006

6th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 17:15, 22-18.1

Gospel: John 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples, "I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the whole truth.

"He has nothing to say of himself but he will speak of what he hears, and he will tell you of the things to come. He will take what is mine and make it known to you; in doing this, he will glorify me. All that the Father has is mine; because of this I have just told you, that the Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you."

Commentary

We get to meet those who picked up the legacy and faith of the disciples. Paul preaches about the unknown god—a statue that stands in Athens—speaks of Jesus now known in word, deed and flesh. This is Jesus who will judge the world with justice; Jesus who has been raised from the dead. Only a few believe. The Word of God is fathomless. The depth is endless and there is always so much more to say. But the gift of the Spirit is given to guide us ever deeper into the truth of the scriptures. All that the Father has given to Jesus, he now seeks to share with us. We are babes in knowing God.

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LIFESTYLE CHECK FLUNKERS

BIR couple charged with graft

By Nelson F. Flores

A HUSBAND AND WIFE WORKING AS REVENUE officers for the Bureau of Internal Revenue have been charged with graft after they failed a lifestyle check.

Marlon Pascual and his wife Emma de Lara Pascual, who were both employed at the San Pablo City revenue district, were charged with violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act after an investigation conducted by the Department of Finance-Revenue Integrity Protection Service turned up evidence that the couple was living beyond their means.

"Despite a combined salary of approximately P24,065 only and even less during their earlier years in government service, the spouses Pascuals were able to accumulate wealth or substantia properties grossly disproportionate to their government income,"

Families of missing Erap backers seek help of Senate

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE FAMILIES OF five missing leaders of a militant organization identified with detained President Joseph Estrada yesterday sought the help of senators in finding their loved ones and obtaining justice for them.

Estrada's son, Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada, delivered a privilege speech condemning the Arroyo administration and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) for the abduction of Virgilio Eustaquio, Jim Cabauatan, Ruben Dioniso, Jose Curameng and Dennis Ebona.

They were officials of the Union of the Masses for Democracy and Justice who were abducted by heavily armed men while having a meeting in Eustaquio's house in Kamuning, Quezon City last Monday.

The Senate committee on human rights was asked to conduct an investigation.

Miriam Eustaquio, Gloria Curameng and Brenda Ebona went to the Senate yesterday and asked the help of Jinggoy, his mother Sen. Luisa "Loi" Estrada and Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.

Jinggoy said there is no information yet as to the whereabouts of abducted LMDJ leaders. He said he has received unconfirmed reports that the Isafp was behind the abduction in broad daylight.

Jinggoy said the UMDJ is a legitimate organization though it is "openly critical" of the Arroyo administration.

"It is an organization that was established to uncover the truth behind the lies of the Arroyo government," he said.

Jinggoy denounced the "brutal and gangster-like" abduction of the pro-Estrada leaders. He said the situation has gone from bad to worse under Ms Arroyo.

"I reiterate this warning because I am certain that the next target will be members of the legitimate opposition. And when that happens, there will be no one else anymore to protest," Jinggoy said.

read the complaint filed with the Office of the Ombudsman yesterday.

According to the DOF-RIPS, the Pascuals were able to acquire three prime properties in San Pablo City, and a house and lot in Baguio City, which they allegedly tried to conceal; and vehicles consisting of a Mitsubishi L-300 and Hyundai Starex vans, a 2003 model Mitsubishi car, a Honda CRV Sports Utility Vehicle, and a Ford Explorer van worth P2 million.

Investigators noted that the Mitsubishi car was registered in the name of Denise Anne Pascual, the couple's daughter who they said had no known gainful employment or business enterprise to justify her acquisition of the vehicle.

The Starex van, bought in 2000, was registered to another daughter, Blessilda, who at the time of the purchase was financially dependent on her parents, the DOF-RIPS documents further showed.

The Honda CRV and Ford Expedition van were acquired in 2001 and 2002. Both vehicles were not declared in the couple's statement of assets, liabilities and net worth.

DOF-RIPS agents said foreign travel was a regular feature of the Pascual lifestyle.

Bureau of Immigration records submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman showed that from 2001 to 2004, Emma Pascual went to Hong Kong, Bangkok, Thailand. In 2001, 2003 and 2006, the wife went to Shanghai and the husband to Hong Kong.

The three Pascual children also traveled abroad in 2002, 2003 and 2005, mostly to Singapore.

"These accumulations and manifestations of wealth do not even include family expenditures and tuition fees of respondent daughters which, judging by respondents' standard of living, could not be less than substantial," the complaint stated.

THE EXOR

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Pattern of impunity

THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAS weighed in on the killings of activists and members of the media. CHR Chair Purificacion Quisumbing told the Inquirer: "We strongly condemn the spate of killings that have yet to be resolved and we have noted that there is a perceived pattern of the violation of the human right to life... If several deaths happened in just a week, these constitute a pattern of impunity." She added: "The pattern of complaints that come to us shows members of the Armed Forces and the PNP (Philippine National Police) as suspects. That has to be addressed and we call on the military to do something about it." And then she bluntly set aside the Arroyo administration's pet rationalizations: "We couldn't care less what colors the killers are. Is the government so helpless?"

Quisumbing then went on to explain, "In human rights terms, the government is still responsible even if persons in authority are not those behind the killings. The government is still responsible in protecting the right to life and the security of homes and public order and property."

That is precisely the point, and one that we have raised repeatedly: the burden of proof rests firmly on the agents of the state, and the circumstantial evidence is strong enough to warrant scrutinizing law enforcement officials.

Strong as Quisumbing's words are, her real objective is to spur the military to action. She said it should take the lead in looking into a situation that is both scandalous and alarming.

In a sense, what is happening is just the latest manifestation of a problem that has existed since the twilight of the Marcos dictatorship. Civilians, concerned about military abuses, appeal to the officer corps to take a hand in fighting those abuses. The AFP, faced with such questions, instinctively passes on the blame to its enemies and resents calls for investigation. Even when the CHR was a presidential committee, prior to the ratification of the present Constitution, this problem was already evident. And it hasn't gone away.

The administration has claimed that the Communist Party of the Philippines is engaged in yet another of those party purges and that the killings—whether of 143 militants from 2006 to March of this year, as the CHR has taken notice of, or 566 or even 601 (depending on who's asked) since President Macapagal-Arroyo took office—are liquidations being undertaken for the CPP's own purposes. Such a claim is, of course, historically plausible, as books ranging from Gregg Jones' to William Chapman's to Joel Rocamora's studies of the communist rebellion suggest. What seems less plausible, though, is that such a purge would take place in such a spectacularly public manner. The past party purge undertaken after Edsa I, after all, remains shrouded in mystery and controversy.

On the other hand, equally—and actually, more—plausible is the connection that has been made between the areas of assignment of Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and an increase in extrajudicial killings and assassinations in those places. Combine these with Palparan's penchant for bloodthirsty rhetoric, and the military brass' decision—fully endorsed by the President—to sweep aside all calls for investigations, preferring, instead, promotions and decorations for Palparan, it isn't difficult to think that the administration fully approves of what he says—and does.

In the end, though, whether the military is doing the liquidating, or the CPP, or both, as Quisumbing says, is not the point. The obligation of the government is not only to put a stop to such killings but to bring the killers to justice. Violence is being done not only to a political minority, it is being inflicted on the majority. The signal being sent to a society that already views life as cheap is that lives dedicated to particular political goals, if such goals don't match official priorities, are cheaper still.

The Philippine military, like any other military anywhere in the world, prefers its own code and system of justice to that of civilians. But it cannot demand its own justice for the purpose of simply protecting its turf or, worse, so that it can ignore troublesome allegations. The AFP likes to say it is a partner for progress. All it has proven up to now is that it may be a party to a bloody conspiracy.

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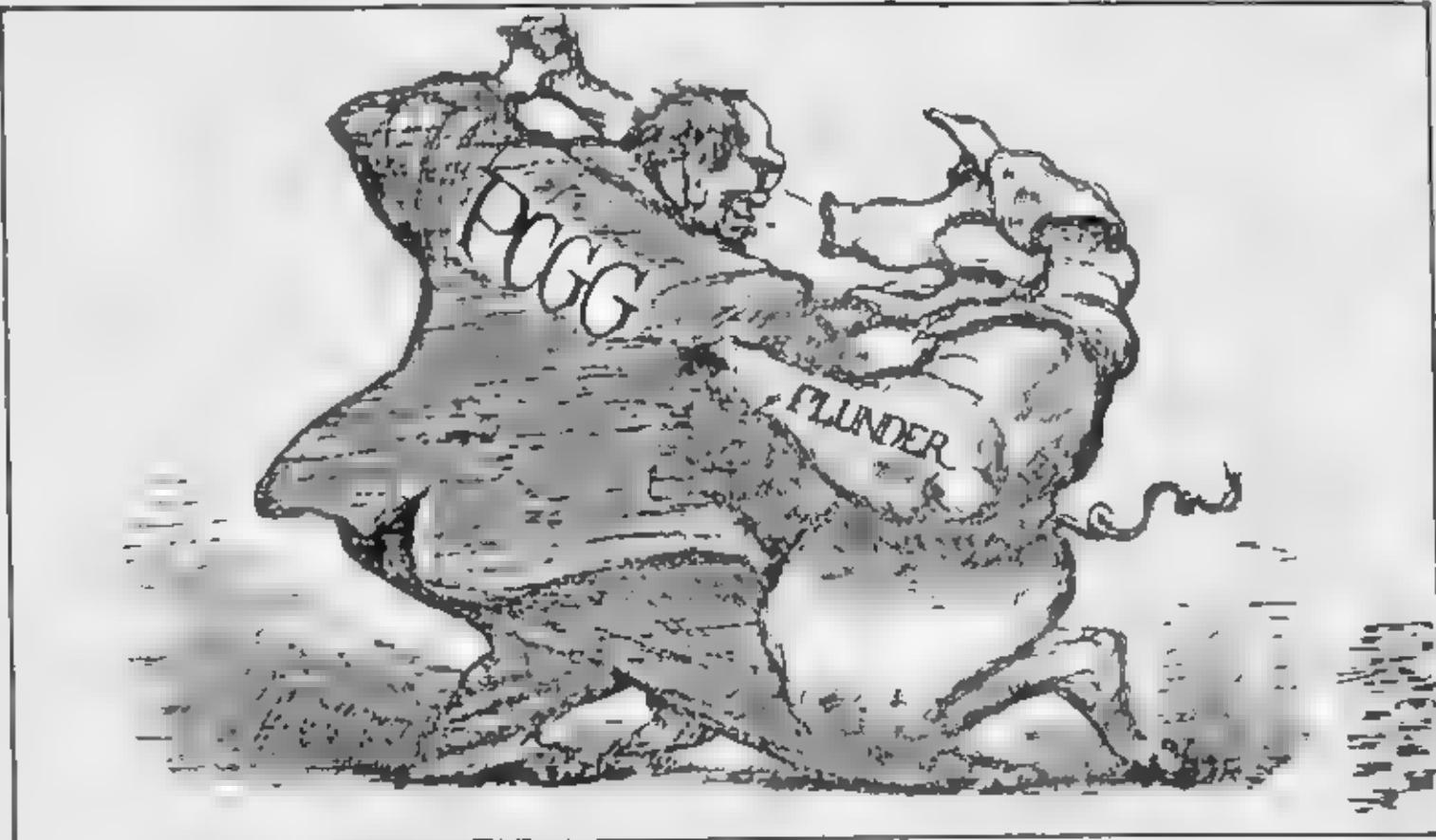
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Mysteries around the MWSS housing project

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

IF YOU BOUGHT A PIECE OF LAND AND somebody offers to swap it with a property that is twice as big, won't you grab it? You would jump at it, unless there is a very good reason for you not to, such as millions of pesos. This is the mystery behind the insistence of a group of members of two labor unions of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), through self-proclaimed surrogates, on putting their housing project on 58 hectares of land inside the La Mesa Dam watershed where it would pollute the water in the reservoir that is the source of the drinking water of 12 million residents of Metro Manila.

There are other mysteries. Like, why would somebody shell out more than P3 million of his own money to pay for the land, even mortgaging his own property to produce the amount? Why would a congressman from Bicol expend his time and effort to represent (pro bono, he claims) people who are not his constituents but who are from Quezon City, thousands of kilometers away from his district? And why would the same congressman act as a messenger for the financier, hand-carrying the P3 million check to the MWSS to hasten the deal? Why is he so unduly interested in consummating the deal?

Why are so many public relations practitioners working for the housing project even if their own water supply would be put in jeopardy by the project?

Who is going to fund the development? The so-called "mitigating measures" alone, banded by the congressman to prevent the pollution of the reservoir, would cost at least P100 million. The cost of land development and the houses would multiply that amount many times more. Why incur P100 million more, which would have to be charged to the beneficiaries, when you can save that much just by moving to another location?

I did some quick arithmetic and came up with another mystery. Fifty-eight hectares of the watershed has been allotted for the housing project for only 1,411 beneficiaries. At the announced

300 sq m per beneficiary, only 423,000 sq m, or 42.3 hectares are needed, plus one hectare for the road network. What will happen to the remaining 15 hectares?

I posed this question to the people representing those pushing the housing project (Rep. Edcel Lagman, counsel of the beneficiaries; Ishko Katibayan, representing the labor unions, and Assistant MWSS Administrator Macra Cruz) at the Kapitan sa Manila last Monday, but they didn't answer the question. (The other panelists were Toto Balayon, operations manager of Bantay Kalikasan, which is opposing the housing project, and Vil Mendoza, also of Bantay Kalikasan.)

So, I ask the question again: What will happen to the remaining 15 hectares? Is it true that this will be used for a commercial complex, a mall and high-rise condominiums? Is it true that this will take up the entire portion along Quirino Avenue? The answers to these questions might explain why so many characters are unduly pushing the project.

When a lawyer claims he is handling a case pro bono, as Lagman claims in this case, it means he is not accepting any money. But a lawyer can be paid some other way, such as with a piece of land, like so many lawyers who handled land cases. (By the way, congressmen are prohibited by law from acting as lawyers for clients while they are members of the House.) Fifteen hectares along a main street like Quirino Avenue in Novacades can cost several hundred million pesos. A 15-hectare mall would make Megamall look like a midget.

I am not suggesting anything, but does that

look like a likely explanation for the undue interest of some characters in the housing project? Does it look like the MWSS workers are being used to push the agenda of these characters? All the workers want is their own homes, and these are being offered to them in another site that is safe and that poses no risk to the health and lives of 12 million fellow Filipinos. So why is it being made to appear that they are insisting on having their housing project inside the La Mesa watershed?

Lagman delivered a privilege speech in the House of Representatives last May 15 attacking the Inquirer for its editorial opposing the housing project in the La Mesa watershed. He also devoted a big part of the speech defending the project. Among other things, he said that giant commercial centers like SM and Robinson's and about 20 subdivisions are in the vicinity of the watershed, some of which are "closer to the reservoir."

He conveniently forgot to mention, however, that all of them are not only outside the watershed (the watershed is fenced) but also on the opposite slope of the ridge surrounding La Mesa. The land here slopes away from the reservoir, unlike the site of the MWSS housing project which is inside the watershed and slopes down toward the reservoir. Water from the commercial centers and the subdivisions flow away from the reservoir while waste from the MWSS housing project would flow toward it. Also, the subdivisions that are nearer to the reservoir are in sites lower than the reservoir so there is no danger of their effluents flowing into it. The MWSS housing project, on the other hand, is much higher than the reservoir, and there is no place for the rainwater to flow but down into the reservoir.

Lagman also said that "mitigating measures" costing at least P100 million would be applied to prevent pollution of the reservoir, and that the La Mesa watershed "has not yet been declared a protected area." These will be discussed in the next column.

Paradoxes

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

dered for his beliefs.)

Much later, George Carlin would amplify on the point. He wrote: "The paradox of our time is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine but less wellness."

"We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We've conquered outer space but not inner space."

"We've done larger things, but not better things. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soil. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less."

There's more, but you get the drift. It does raise a lot of questions about the things that really matter in life, or the difference between gold and glitter. This country has its own unique paradoxes, and the text message I got about us managing to reach the top of the world but not the bottom of a bridge by the Pasig has inspired me to make my own list of them:

We object violently to the apparent falsehoods of a work of fiction, but we accept abjectly the

patent lies of a real piece of work currently residing in Malacañang. We find that "The Da Vinci Code" is full of s---, but we find that the Di Venecia Code is full of grit. (I got both from text messages as well.)

We have more bishops to help us discern truth from lie, but we have fewer bishops who can tell truth from lie. We have more religious leaders to lead the flock to the straight and narrow, but we have more (un)faithful straying into the wild and crooked. We have more religious cults to help sinners find the light of God, but we have more pious men being blinded by the glitter of gold. We have more TV stations preaching the word of God, but we have fewer people listening to the word of God.

We are the most religious country in Asia, but we are the most immoral country in Asia. We are one of the most gifted people in the world, but we are one of the most backward people in the world. We have more lawyers, but we have less justice. We have more legislators, but we have less legislation. We have more cops, but we have less peace and order. We have more anti-corruption bodies, but we have more corruption. We have more people partaking of riches abroad, but we have more people starving at home. We have more people taking care of the sick and elderly abroad, but we have fewer people taking care of the sick and elderly at home. We've become "globalized," but we remain parochial. We speak English more than other Asians, but we communicate less than other Asians. We have more education, but we have less learning. We have more Ph.D.s, but we have less IQ.

We want to Chu-chu, but we are paralytic. We plan more, but we achieve less. We are the longest democracy in Asia, but we are the longest autocracy in Asia. We extol the virtues of human rights, but we kill journalists and leftists pride ourselves on being free, but we refuse to believe that the truth shall make us free.

We have managed to reach the top of Mount Everest. When will we reach the foot of Mount Meru?

'The world is flat'

COMMENTARY

Nono Alfonso, S.J.

Institute on Church and Social Issues

IN HIS BOOK, "THE WORLD IS FLAT: A BRIEF History of the Twenty-first Century," Thomas Friedman dwells on the changes that are fast shaping the global economy and international politics. These, he says, are hinged on "three convergences": the invention of new technology, which in turn has created a new playing field among countries, companies and individuals, including such new players as India and China. All these have conspired, he says, to create a "flat" world, that is, a more horizontal world.

In contrast with the old economic order which was marked by the domination of the so-called North countries such as the United States and Europe, in this horizontal world, even developing countries have become economic stakeholders. He cites the case of Bangalore in India which has been very successful in the IT industry. Indeed in this flat world, India and China have become emerging economic superpowers. Moreover, individuals with know-how are empowered and get to compete with the rest of the world. Now more than ever, he writes, Indian and Chinese nationals no longer need to leave their countries, but can create their niches right at home.

This new world order, Friedman says, does not only bring economic benefits but also political advantages, in particular, international peace and order. It will be recalled that in his book, "The Lexus and the Olive Tree," he proposed—albeit with tongue in cheek—that those countries with the McDonald's franchise do not easily go to war. With their rising economic status as marked by the McDonald's restaurant, the middle class would be reluctant to get into war with any country.

In "The World is Flat," Friedman offers a new theory: what he calls the "Dell theory of conflict prevention." Dell, of course, is the successful US computer company which outsources to other countries many of its operations. According to this theory, countries which are part of what he

terms the "global supply chain," would naturally avoid war lest they lose their economic position in that supply chain. He cites the example of India which nearly went to war with Pakistan in 2004. A strong lobby from the booming IT sector in India put pressure on the war-mongering politicians of the Indian parliament, which might have been the single factor that prevented the war.

A second case is that of Taiwan. In 2004, the government went into the elections with a political platform declaring independence from China. It lost in the elections, the populace not wanting to agitate China and unnecessarily compromise its business relations with China.

Finally, on the issue of terrorism, he cites the case of Indian Muslims. For him, it is not surprising that no Indian Muslims have been found to be involved in the al-Qaeda terrorist network in general, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in particular. The reason for this, Friedman opines, is simply that Indian Muslims are empowered economically and see their stake in the globalizing world—something that we must seriously consider in the ongoing conflict in Mindanao.

But what has all this got to do with countries like our own? Friedman, in a section on the unfat world, prescribes the usual need for fundamental economics, good government, education and infrastructure. However, more interesting is his insistence that what can spell the difference for fledgling economies is culture.

Firstly, Friedman says, the culture should be one that is "outward," that is, open to engaging the global community. According to him, what

accounted for the success of China and India was their opening up to the world.

Secondly, in a paradoxical way, this culture must remain "inward." He writes, "By that I mean, to what degree is there a sense of national solidarity and a focus on development ... and to what degree are the elites in the country concerned with the masses and ready to invest at home, or are they indifferent to their own poor and more interested in investing abroad."

For the Philippines, there is the rub. Although we have proven ourselves to be outward-looking with the "hospitality" in which we take pride, how inward-looking we are in terms of nationalism or patriotism does not come across clearly. In the ongoing political controversy, for instance, in particular, the question of Charter change, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, for one, clearly doubts whether the purpose is really the good of the country. Or, whether in fact such a costly political exercise would only benefit the deeply entrenched interests of the political and economic elite.

In the end, for Friedman, the challenge for developing countries in a flatter world is how to empower them, how to make them stakeholders of their future and that of the world. Empowered, they are able to dream and imagine. And for Friedman, that is what the flat world is all about.

Ushered in by the fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, 1989 (11/9), the flat world was born on that eventful day when we were able to imagine a world beyond the Cold War, a world that can be united and in peace. The future of the world will also depend on this capacity to dream and imagine. Friedman writes: "People who are connected to the world and exposed to different cultures and perspectives are far more likely to develop the imagination of 11/9. People who are feeling disconnected, for whom personal freedom and fulfillment are a utopian fantasy, are more likely to develop the imagination of 9/11."

Art for peace and development

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

cult task, indeed. But the dedicated student of theater and the arts will be rewarded richly.

As National Commission for Culture and the Arts executive director Cecile Guidote-Alvarez said: "This will be a defining moment not only for the Philippines but also for the global community of artists and cultural workers. We shall witness in the next few days the commitment of the world's 'theater powers' to use their arsenal of creativity for the cause of fighting global illiteracy and malnutrition, poverty and injustice."

THERE'S a news report that the Baguio City government is suing a drug trading firm for P3 million in damages for running a print ad that "implicated a link" between the city and meningococcosis, an infectious and fatal strain of meningitis.

If you will recall, Baguio made it to the headlines last year after a number of "meningo" cases were reported. The supposed "outbreak" cost Baguio businesses millions of pesos in actual damages and lost potential income after tourist arrivals abruptly stopped and major conventions were canceled.

Perhaps the city government is justified in its action, since it wants the "meningo" link sooner forgotten, and anything that serves to remind the public about the disease must be smacked down as soon as possible. There's more than a smidgen of malice, too, in the use of pictures of Kennon Road and of rice terraces to sell an anti-meningo vaccine.

But city officials cannot wash their hands com-

pletely clean of blame. It was the Baguio mayor, after all, who drew national attention to the "meningo" scare when he declared a state of emergency in Baguio after the first few cases were reported. Baguio residents, who had tourism-related businesses in the city I talked with were furious about this development and even swore they would support any recall procedure lodged against their mayor. I don't know how such an initiative fared, but the "meningo" scare in Baguio still stands as a classic example of how to turn a limited, though worrying, number of cases into a full-blown public health crisis.

NOTES: My friend Mila Alora texted to tell me that the title of the song composed by Paul Anka for Sammy Davis Jr., which was featured in Anka's recent concert at the Araneta Coliseum, is "I'm Not Every Other Man." Anka said he wrote the song as the finale of a TV special of Davis, which turned out to be a farewell anthem of sorts for the African-American entertainer who died shortly after.

Friends warn me that they were decidedly "underwhelmed" by "The Da Vinci Code," perhaps one of the most awaited movies of the year, what with the huge controversy it stirred in these parts. I haven't seen the film yet, but I can well understand how a movie, no matter how well-made, cannot but disappoint, since it could not possibly live up to all the hype.

I wanted to share my views on the movie with readers as soon as I could, but when we went to Eastwood cinemas Sunday evening in hopes of catching a screening, we were told that all screenings had been sold out. When we asked what screening (in two theaters) we could buy advance tickets for, we were told that it was for the midnight showing!

A friend from Columbia Pictures explained that the decision of the SM Group, which accounts for about 40 percent of theaters in the country, not to show "Da Vinci" severely limited the number of theaters carrying the movie, leading to the outsize demand for tickets.

If you don't have anyone asking you for help, I'd advise you visit your alma mater or a school which you feel is worth your while, and ask how you can put up a scholarship fund.

You can leave the screening to the scholars' office, al-

though you can always give certain specifications in terms of

grade requirements, courses, or even ethnic and religious background. I'm a firm believer in affirmative action, of giving an added advantage to those who have been marginalized by historical circumstances—Muslims, for example.

If you are supporting individuals on your own, take time out to help a scholar look for a school. There are so many diploma mills around. Be careful about schools that make extravagant claims such as instant employment. Be realistic with the prospects. A six-month caregiver course, for example, isn't enough for Canada, which requires two years of college units as well.

Visit the schools yourself to check out facilities, faculty, students. Probe into their tuition and payment plans. Go for paying an entire year's tuition since installment plans sometimes border on usury.

Also make sure to ask about incidental fees that might turn out to be more than incidental—for books, supplies, even computers for those computer courses. Always negotiate well with the family about a local counterpart, taking care of allowances for example. But be prepared, too, for unanticipated expenses.

Find ways to check, regularly, on the student's progress. Don't wait until his grades come in to find out something had gone wrong. The scholar's needs go beyond the financial; for example, if the student comes from a low-income family, or from a rural area, you will need to keep encouraging the scholar and building his self-confidence, as he grapples with a new environment like UP or Ateneo.

You don't have to be rich to have scholars. Share what you can with poorer relatives, or children of your employees, taking care of just the tuition, or books. For older scholars, offer part-time work so they can feel they're supporting themselves.

Even fairly small amounts will go a long way. For example, UP suggests P50,000 to support a scholar's living costs for a school year. If I may appeal to overseas Filipinos, that's less than \$1,000. At West Visayas State University's medical college, P20,000 pays for a year's tuition. That's less than \$400.

It was P10,000 a year when I first pitched in with West Visayas. One of my scholars graduated last year among the top students in his class, and romped off with several awards as an outstanding intern, telling me as he got each award. He's now reviewing for the board exams.

Even in developed countries, there will always be good students who need just a little help to get going in life. For a country like the Philippines, doing our share, no matter how small, becomes a matter of national survival.

Scholars

IT USED TO BE THAT PEOPLE WOULD BRING JEWELRY TO THE pawnshops when they needed money. But these days, they bring their cell phones to the Greenhills Shopping Center to sell.

There's a whole section now of used (or, to use the nice term, "pre-owned") organizers, digital cameras and even an occasional laptop or two. On a recent visit, I noticed how

some of the gadgets were practically

brand new. I did

wonder aloud to one

vendor if they were

"GSM" (galing sa

magnanakaw, or hot

stolen goods). The

vendor gave me a

hurry look, followed

by a sad one, explaining in Filipino that they get more of

these items around the month of May, the sellers needing

cash to pay tuition fees.

This year more than in previous ones, I sense that Filipinos are finding it harder to keep their children in school. The really poor ones talk about pulling their children out of a public school. Tuition may be free but they can't afford the transportation, food allowance, books and supplies. What's shocking, too, are the number of middle-class parents who are transferring their children from private to public schools.

Government scholarships are hard to come by, so many of us have to take up the slack, often with poorer relatives. But I feel strongly, too, that if we do have the resources, we should also be helping those who are not related to us. The country's going to lag behind even more if we allow so much human potential out there to go to waste.

Decisions

Given the number of people in need, it can be difficult making decisions on whom to support, what courses to take and in which school. I've learned, often the hard way, so I thought of sharing a few lessons I picked up with the ones I put through school.

First, whom to support? It's hard to say. "Bright" is difficult to measure, given that there are actually multiple intelligences. A kid may not be good in math, but excel in the arts, for example. Trust your instincts; I'd go more for diligence and an eagerness to learn.

Grade school, high school or college? I'd give first priority to support kids through high school or college, but I occasionally help out with a promising child in grade school. In many cases, investing in good elementary education means a strong foundation that can get a child into a government science high school, or into a state college later on, with lower tuition but with good quality education.

If you do decide to support someone for tertiary education, sit down with the student and the family to explore options thoroughly. Frankly, unless the child is exceptional, I wouldn't invest in a four-year course. Be extra careful about males, sadly, even poor families privilege their sons too much and they tend to just squander their opportunities.

Laddered education

If you do want to go for a four-year course, avoid "commerce" and "computer science" and other fads. Work out a laddered arrangement that allows your scholar to obtain a certificate or diploma through different steps. Start out with vocational-type courses. Electronics is still a good one to go for, given how people are always looking for a good person to repair household appliances.

Perhaps the best initial "investment" is still a six-month caregiver course which could mean an overseas placement. (I say this with a heavy heart, but for so many families, this may be the only way to move out of perpetual dependency.)

After the six-month caregiver course, promising students can go on to take a two-year course in practical nursing or as a nursing aide. That can be followed by another two years to get a bachelor's degree in nursing. If the student really does well, hold your breath, you can go on to support him through medicine.

You can take a short cut (as I do), and simply support medical students. They tend to be a more mature and reliable lot, and these days, more genuinely interested in the profession than in finding a way to migrate.

Schools

If you don't have anyone asking you for help, I'd advise you visit your alma mater or a school which you feel is worth your while, and ask how you can put up a scholarship fund. You can leave the screening to the scholars' office, although you can always give certain specifications in terms of grade requirements, courses, or even ethnic and religious background. I'm a firm believer in affirmative action, of giving an added advantage to those who have been marginalized by historical circumstances—Muslims, for example.

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LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R.

Ocampo

spires/ My psaltery unrefined/ With voices my

mind doth seek/ To sing its ardent love.

Four pleasing image alone,/ In my soft heart al-

ways engraved,/ Now removes from me the fraud/

The loved star from sailor forlorn/ As in an agitated

sea.

For you're, sweet friend of mine,/ The only joy of my soul,/ And always to be with you/ Is my incessant desire/ In this sad, unfortunate land.

But since my luck denies/ My Muse with tenderness this day,/ My Muse with tenderness/ Its affection doth send to you/ At this pleasant hour of joy.

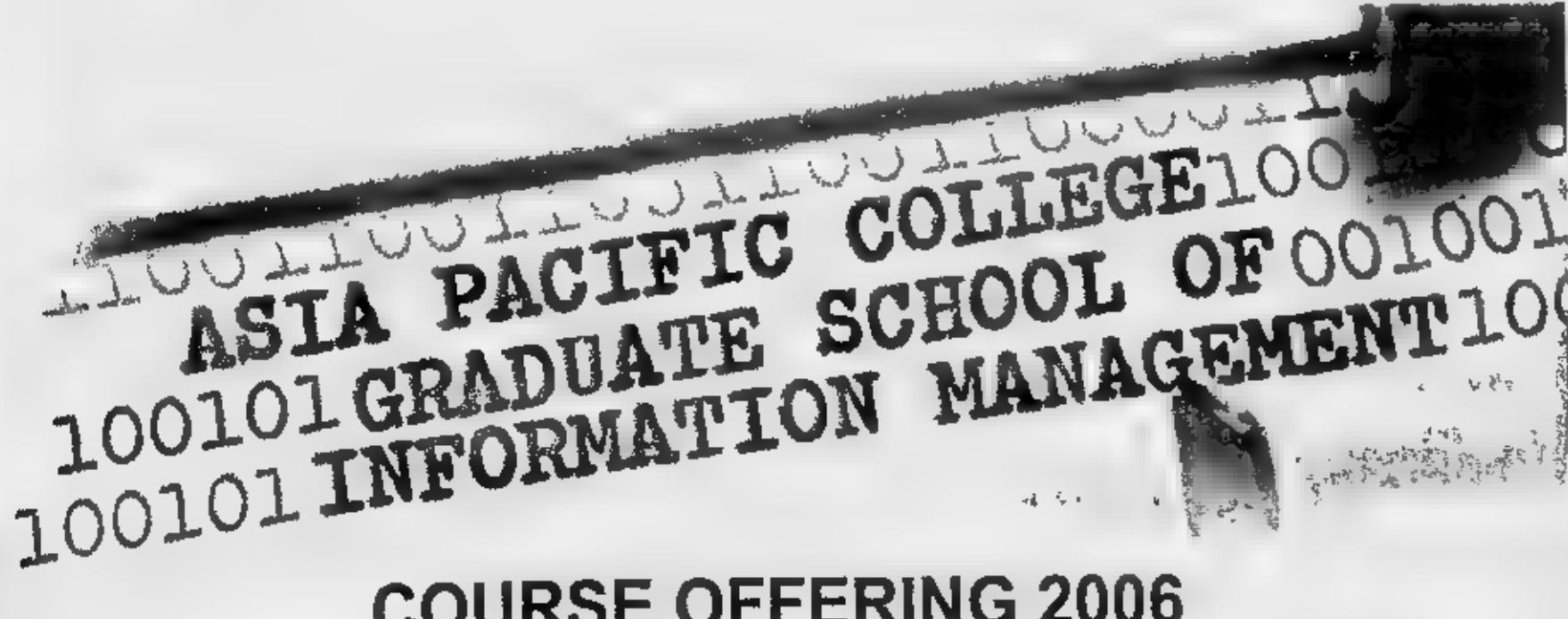
That as the ardent rays/ Of the sun eclipse feeble stars/ With mortal grief/ As with belles-lettres your leave/ Behind heath your footprints the rest.

That such enthusiasm your years/ Frustration, wickedness, sad fears/ Without perturbing your peace/ Like a brook among flowers gay/ With thing of fresh insight and basic research.

The results were amazing. I knew much of the material myself and could check if they were faking it, but for many of the students, reading Rizal's letters raw was like meeting him for the first time. It was an awakening of sorts as they encountered a human being, not a national hero.

The fact that Rizal was human, like you and me, is something we tend to forget. We often imagine that Rizal was made of bronze and stone, that he was a monument from the time of his conception.

Last week, two of my students came up to me after class with a volume of



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SIM

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Starts June 10

Dime-a-dozen politicians

I WRITE IN REFERENCE TO THE ARTICLE "BIR chief in hot water over poor collections." (PDI, 5/13/06) Rep. Joey Salceda's scathing criticism of BIR (Bureau of Internal Revenue) chief Jose Mario Buñag might have been meaningful if it had been made in the past. But today, it amounts to nothing but an angry and scornful, though completely irrelevant, remark.

Salceda ceased being an economist worth listening to quite a while ago. The reason? He has degenerated into a true politician (read: a "leader" who believes in self-interest first, second and always). Therefore, his opinions on economic matters must not be sought as they will always be politically tainted. It is the obligation of the INQUIRER—when trying to make a balanced news report about an issue—to listen to and publish the positions of people who make an honest, competent and relevant assessment of the issue; it should not bother with political statements that advance only the politicians' self-interests.

As we all know, politicians in the Philippines are dime a dozen. On the other hand, competent and decent professionals like Buñag are rare and valuable.

—PATRICK HERNANDEZ-DEAKIN,
pdeakin@gmail.com

No compelling reason for moratorium on mining

WE HAVE READ WITH INTEREST THE editorial implying that the government faces a dilemma over the Lafayette mining issue. (PDI, 5/23/06) This, despite the fact that Malacañang has stated it is standing firm on its policy to promote mining and attract foreign investors, and that the answer to the public's concerns about mining is not a ban but the strict imposition of environmental standards and safeguards already in place, as well as the no-nonsense enforcement of laws.

Sagip Isla, Sagip Kapwa Inc., Ateneo de Naga University's Institute for Environmental Conservation and Research, has been critical of the mining industry from the start and has been opposed to mining in Rapu-Rapu even before Lafayette operated there. It is therefore not surprising that their arguments and advocacy make a case against the industry.

Also, please note that the Bases Commission's report, which is supposed to be an "independent commission," followed closely the position of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. By tailor-fitting its findings to the views and opinions of the CBCP, the commission has sacrificed its objectivity and credibility.

By coincidence, the issues that came out in the report were the same as those raised by the NGO that questioned the constitutionality of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. They also echoed the same anti-mining sentiments articulated during the oral hearing of the case before the Supreme Court.

The Bases Commission admitted that further studies will be needed to establish the causal connection between the incident and the alleged health and environmental implications. With the commission's conclusions not empirically established and merely based on assumptions and probabilities, we feel there is no compelling reason for a moratorium even if temporary. The final decision about this matter should come from the Pollution Adjudication Board (PAB), as chaired by the environment secretary, after it has undertaken all the necessary evaluation of the incident with proper regard to due process. We are sure that PAB's findings will be fair and just, and the company will abide by its decision.

In spite of the flaws, we consider the commission's report to be an important document in the sense that it has identified various issues and concerns worthy of consideration by the company and the whole mining industry. These issues are vital in our advocacy for responsible mining.

We assure you that mining companies are aware of their environmental and social responsibilities. They know the direct and indirect impacts of mining on the environment and how these can be managed through strict compliance with environmental regulations and technologies. They are also aware that over and above these concerns is the responsibility to use the country's God-given, natural resources for the betterment of our communities and people.

—NELIA G. HALCON,
executive vice president,
Chamber of Mines of the Philippines

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Pangasinan militants accuse cops of coverup

DAGUPAN CITY—MILITANT GROUPS in Pangasinan have assailed the police for supposedly trying to clear the Arroyo administration of responsibility in the killings of political activists.

In a statement, the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-Pangasinan (Bayan-Pangasinan) said the police's Task Force Doton, which was formed to investigate the murder of Bayan-Pangasinan secretary general Jose Doton, has effectively absolved the Arroyo administration when it cited Doton's involvement in politics as a possible reason for the attack.

"The task force's earlier pronouncement that a possible rift in local politics was the reason for Ka Jose's murder only showed the task force wanted to immediately clear the Arroyo administration of responsibility despite the absence of a deep investigation," the statement said in Filipino.

It also said the military's statements blaming the Communist Party of the Philippines' internal purge for the killings were aimed at diverting people's attention from the responsibility of the Arroyo administration for these attacks.

But Supt. Noli Talifio, head of the

Task Force Doton, denied Bayan-Pangasinan's charges.

"We are looking at politics as only one of the many reasons which could be behind the killing. We are pursuing several angles," Talifio said in a telephone interview.

He said the task force is still investigating the murder and has not considered only one group behind the attack. "We considered politics because of some information we gathered that Doton was an active campaigner for a local politician in San Nicolas. Local politicians are very vocal about politics being the motive in the attack," Talifio said.

Doton will be buried at the San Nicolas town cemetery on Saturday.

In Bataan, about 1,000 members of the Kilusang para sa Pambansang Demokrasya, farmers' groups and other organizations joined the funeral march for KPD organizer Annaliza Abanador on Tuesday. Abanador was gunned down in her office on May 18.

Leaders of the KPD and other groups assailed the Arroyo administration for allowing the military to sow terror among militant leaders in the country.

"This is a military campaign which the

Arroyo regime had been tolerating for sometime now to silence militants," said Millet Morante, KPD secretary general.

Abanador was the third KPD member shot and killed in Bataan since last year.

"We are coordinating with some groups of concerned citizens to help us find justice for our slain colleague," Morante said.

A fact-finding mission by 11 groups led by the Citizen's Council for Human Rights (CCHR) gathered accounts linking the military to extra-judicial killings in Pampanga.

A survivor of an attempted murder on Jan. 31, 2005, in San Simon town and a witness to the Jan. 10, 2006 killing of farmer leader Antonio Achales in Mexico town have identified two of the perpetrators as members of the Batu Brothers Group.

The group's members, according to testimonies of residents, have been seen in counter-insurgency operations by the Philippine Army in the villages.

The CCHR team said the group's members, who are former rebels, were reportedly involved in extortion and hired killings. Rosette Oreyas and Greg Refraction, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes and Desiree Calzada, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau.

P1.8M of small town's funds unaccounted for

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE TREASURER and revenue officer of Bacone town are under investigation for failing to account for P1.8 million of the town's money.

Bacone Mayor Rodolfo Yee said he formed an investigating team to look into the amount left unaccounted for by Bacone Treasurer Niceto Zamora and revenue collection clerk Guadalupe Sumagka.

The Bureau of Local Government Finance (BLGF), following an audit last May 6, concluded that Zamora and Sumagka had failed to account for some P1.8 million.

Yee said the two were given enough time to replenish the amount that was discovered unaccounted for but failed to do so.

But in a report dated March 31, Zamora denied any wrongdoing and blamed Sumagka for the un-

accounted funds.

Zamora said Sumagka has been allowing cash advances, even for the mayor, without his knowledge.

"I never authorized cash advances but only that considering that the one who obtained them from Sumagka and the collectors were high officials who impose their influence upon them, they could not refuse. Now it is just simply making the treasurer liable for acts committed by high officials of the LGU," Zamora said.

Zamora reminded the mayor that he, in fact, filed an administrative complaint against Sumagka on Aug. 15, 2005 at the mayor's office, but no action has been taken, prompting him to bring the matter to the Ombudsman.

Vehemently denying the allegations, Sumagka, in her counter-affidavit, said "Zamora cannot

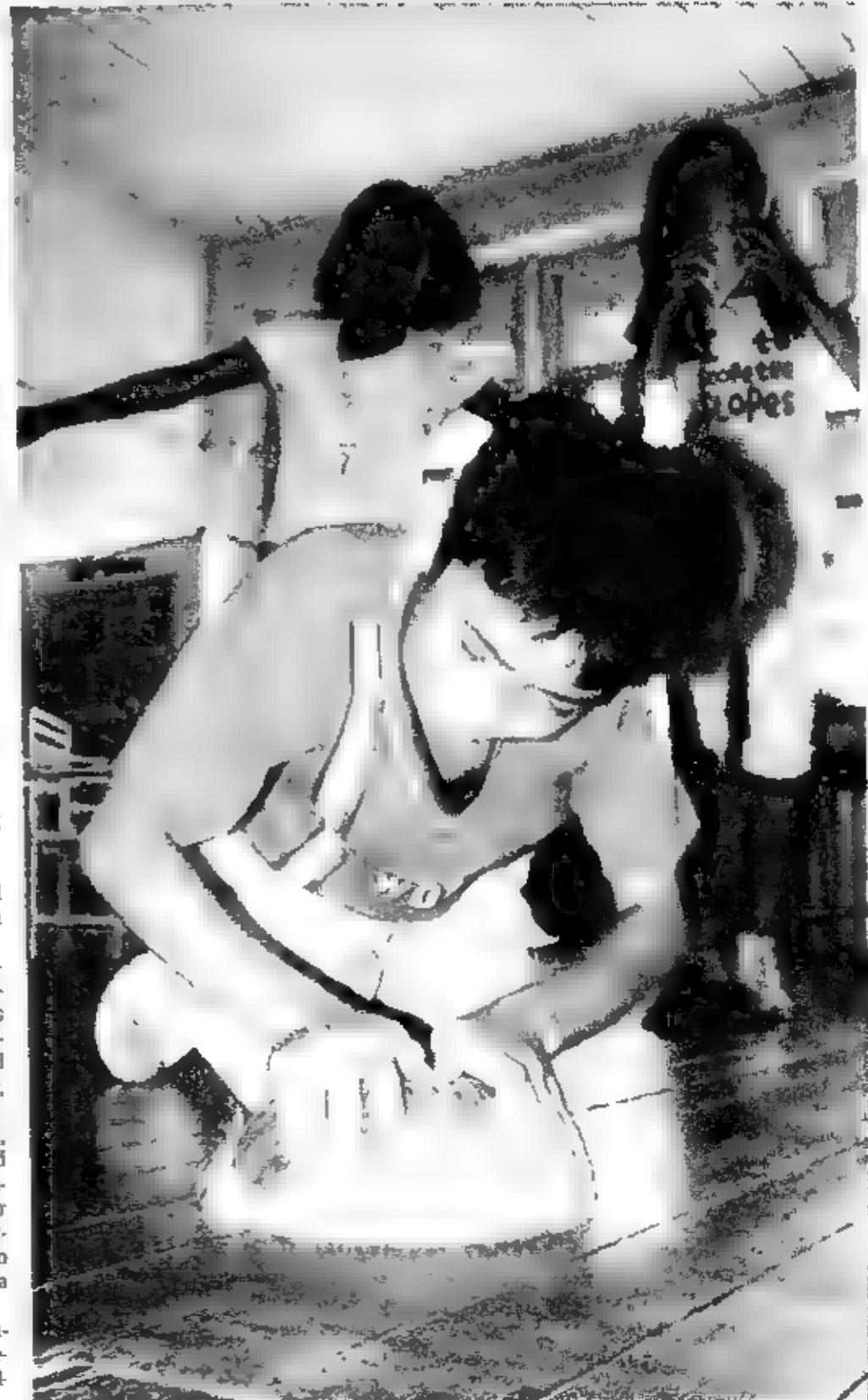
avoid accountability by passing blame."

"I have no knowledge of any cash. I do not participate in cash in and cash out transactions," Sumagka added.

Municipal collectors, Sumagka said, deposit their cash collection at the bank and if there is any amount that was not deposited, the money will be turned over to the municipal treasurer, she said.

"What I received are documents, such as deposit slips, cash vales and cash advances slips from the collectors and municipal employees for purposes of recording and reporting. I therefore have nothing to do with any cash shortage," Sumagka said.

She also said that she has documents to prove that Zamora received money from municipal collectors.



MANUAL LABOR ANGELA ALMACEN/PIVANAS BUREAU
A pupil uses a coconut shell to polish the floor of his classroom at the Jaro I Elementary School in Iloilo City. The government has resorted to tapping students and teachers for cleanup jobs in schools for lack of funds.

GMA heckler stands firm she did right

IMUS, CAVITE—A CONTROVERSIAL GRADUATE of the Cavite State University, who heckled President Macapagal-Arroyo during the school's commencement exercises last month, showed up at the provincial prosecutor's office here on Tuesday to face the charges the police filed against her.

Ma. Theresa Pangilinan, a mass communications graduate, filed her counter affidavit at about 11 a.m. before Russa Elmira Caraculan-Villarin, the Cavite assistant prosecutor, during the preliminary investigation of her case.

Pangilinan, along with fellow graduate Apolinario Dayandayan, was charged with public scandal by the Indang, Cavite police.

Also named respondents in the charge sheet were Sheryl Villegas, secretary general of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan in Cavite, Marilyn Gonzales, chair of the Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW), and six other unidentified persons.

PO2 Russel Sierra, PO2 Sherwin Chavez and PO1 Houdim Cuevas of the Indang police station were the complainants in the said case.

Pangilinan, who gained national prominence after heckling the President, and her co-accused were joined by 15 other members of Bayan and SCW.

Lawyer Walter Go, counsel for Dayayan, also showed up at the hearing.

Two members of the Indang police were likewise present at the prosecutor's office.

After almost one hour, Pangilinan and her group emerged from the prosecutor's office.

The next preliminary investigation was set on May 30, 2006.

Speaking with the INQUIRER, Pangilinan said she was not intimidated by the case which, she said, was nothing but a form of harassment and political repression.

She said she was prepared to face the consequences of her actions.

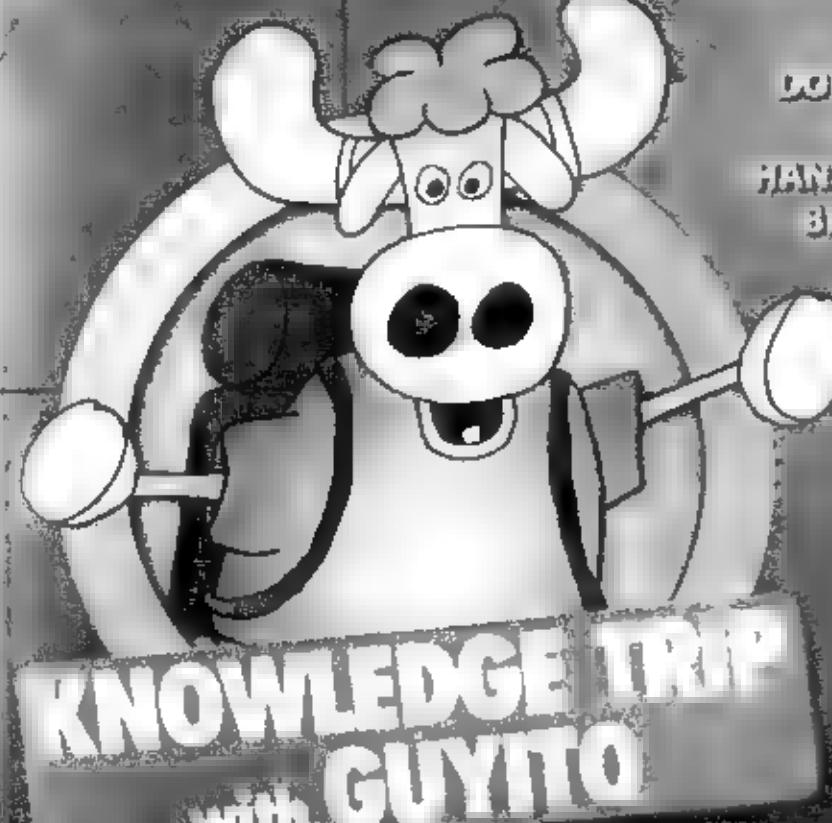
"I am not afraid because I did nothing wrong. What I did was to voice out the sentiments of millions of Filipinos who are dead tired of Ms Arroyo's lies," she said.

Pangilinan admitted that her parents were bothered with the filing of the case against her. "But they understood my situation after I explained it to them."

She then lashed out at Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez who, she said, used "the government's small machinery, like the local police, in intimidating critics of the government."

Pangilinan said instead of giving importance to her case and other political cases, the government should instead focus on how to provide for the basic education of the youth. Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau.

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EDWIN BACASMAS/PDI PHOTO

Nat'l gov't dared: Show sincerity on 'jueteng'

SANTIAGO CITY—TOP LOCAL officials of the province have turned the tables on the national government, saying it should show first its sincerity in curbing "jueteng," which has resurfaced in many parts of the country in the past three weeks.

Isabela Gov. Maria Gracia Cielo Padaca on Monday said the recent resurgence of jueteng in the province could have the approval of officials of the national government and the Philippine National Police.

"I am afraid that (the ones responsible) may be people of the PNP and I hope—really, really

hope—that they have not the encouragement or tacit approval of top national executives," she said.

Padaca was reacting to news reports quoting anti-jueteng czar Edward Hagedorn as saying that only the law enforcement agencies and local officials could stop the illegal numbers game.

"Juetteng is back, has been allowed to come back, or even encouraged to come back. I hope the people who are behind this (would) stop playing innocent." Huwag na nilang dramahan ang taong bayan

(They should stop fooling the people)," she said.

She said she was still awaiting results on her request for the relief of Senior Supt. Oscar Fiesta, acting Isabela provincial director, for what she called his "ineffectiveness" to stop the illegal lottery game in the province.

Alicia Mayor Napoleon Dy, president of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines chapter in Isabela, stopped short of blaming the national government for its supposed indifference over jueteng, while passing the buck to local and police officials.

"This (anti-illegal gambling) campaign is not (the responsibility of the) PNP or the mayors alone. This is a national problem, so the national government should do something also," Dy told the INQUIRER.

He, however, admitted that some mayors have opted to "go back to the old ways" after operations of the Small Town Lottery, which the government intended as a legal substitute to jueteng, failed to take off in Isabela.

"We can no longer prevent (the mayors) We will be hypocrites not to admit that many

of them are also going hungry," he said, without elaborating.

He said Isabela mayors had agreed to reject STL operations in the province after they discovered that the franchises had been awarded to gambling lords, purportedly with the use of dummy corporations.

Contacted through his mobile phone from Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, Cagayan Valley police director, however, maintained that the police were "doing (their) best to contain the jueteng

problem."

He cited the continued operations of an anti-illegal gambling task force sent by PNP chief, Director General Arturo Lomibao, which had arrested scores of bet collectors in a series of raids in various towns and cities here.

For his part, Fiesta insisted that they have been conducting daily operations on suspected jueteng areas but the raiding teams often encountered bet collection activities for EZ2 lottery, a government-sanctioned game. Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Top PNP exec tells cops housing units not for mistresses

CALAMBA CITY—A TOP OFFICIAL of the Philippine National Police issued a reminder to all policemen applying for the PNP's housing program.

"Be sure that the house you're buying is for your legal wife and children," said Director General Oscar Calderon, the PNP deputy chief for administration and chair of the PNP housing board, on Thursday as he warned against erring policemen having extramarital affairs who are planning to avail themselves of the program.

"Hindi pwedeng 'number two' ang tumira sa pabahay ng PNP. Only the legal family of the policeman is allowed to stay at our housing projects," Calderon said, adding that the PNP never tolerates illicit affairs.

"Ito lang dapat ang 'maybahay' ng pabahay. Yung iba naman kasi may condominium or apartment," he said in jest.

Calderon, widely touted as the successor of current PNP chief Director General Arturo Lomibao who is due to retire in July, was here as guest speaker at the induction ceremony of the PRO4 Press Corps on Thursday night.

He said the PNP housing board has set stringent measures to make sure that nobody can take advantage of the project designed to help over 73,000 police personnel who do not have houses of their own.

"We have strict ground rules for this," he said.

The PNP, he said, has also created a screening committee which will scrutinize all applications for the project.

The committee will be composed of members of Gawad Kaaga, the PNP's private sector partner, one from the local government and another from the PNP.

Calderon said the project will prioritize low-salaried police officers from Police Officer



1 to Senior Police Officer 4.

Housing programs

"Walang palakasan dito. We will make sure that the ones who will benefit from the housing programs are low-ranking, the man-on-the-street officers of the PNP," he said.

He said the average cost of each housing unit, measuring about 100 square meters, will be P60,000.

Beneficiaries of the project will just pay P400 a month for three years to be able to own their house after the Armed Forces of the Philippines Savings and Loans Association Inc. and Public Safety Mutual Benefit Financial Institution promised to shoulder half of the cost.

For junior officers, Calderon said they are planning to construct condominiums inside different police camps and government-owned lots in the country.

Initially, he said they are looking at Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan as a pilot project in Metro Manila.

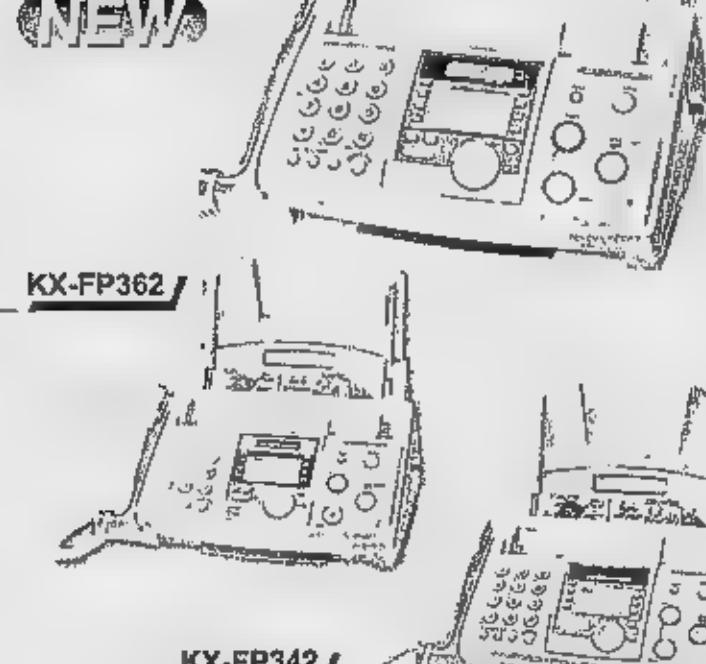
"We have to have a flagship in Metro Manila. If the plan pushes through, we will build eight four-story buildings in Bagong Diwa," he said. Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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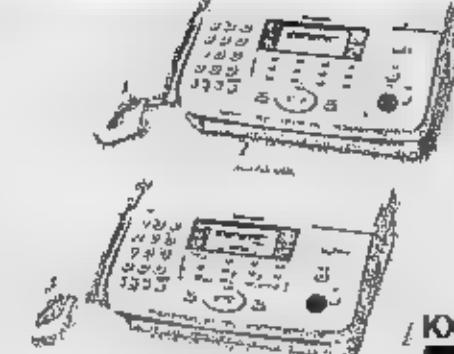
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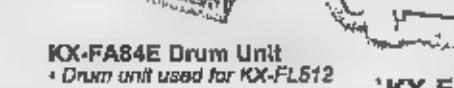
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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Saving Paoay's old 'Duque House'

By Cristina Arzadon
Paoay, Ilocos Norte

OWNERS OF A HERITAGE HOUSE IN PAOAY, ILOCOS Norte are restoring the local landmark—a bubble-topped octagonal structure built by the late Constancio Duque, a school teacher, in the early 1940s.

Locally known as the "Duque House," the American period architecture was given tribute as one of three heritage homes in Paoay, along with the well-preserved twin Bahay na Bato ("White Houses" to locals) owned by the family of Supreme Court Associate Justice Conchita Carpio-Morales.

Duque was one of the Ilocanos who moved to the United States in the early 1900s. "He got the idea to go to the US because all his friends had left the Philippines," said his only son Estanislao, now a doctor based in Mindanao.

"But unlike other Ilocanos who worked in sugarcane fields, Constancio, then a 16-year-old high school student enrolled in seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, flew to Chicago, Illinois, to continue his studies."

"He went there without knowing anybody. He used a one-year stipend that he had saved from the seminary for his plane ticket and start up his schooling," Estanislao said.

American-inspired

Duque finished high school and college in the US before returning to Paoay in 1939 when he built the

American-inspired colonial house. "It was in Chicago where my father got the design for our house," said Duquesa Duque-Dugan, his youngest daughter who now lives in Australia.

"He always wanted to be different. At the time when the neighborhood houses were the typical box-type wooden structure, our father built an octagonal house using only his memory of the 20 years he stayed in Chicago," Dugan said.

"I remember when we were young, we would be asked where we live and we would say, 'Iday nag-buket' (There at the round house)," she said.

The old Duque was said to have hired skilled carpenters to execute the architectural design he had kept only in his mind. The house is made of wooden stone-cut facade with a bonnet of a roof.

Bubble-topped houses remain a landmark there, said his eldest daughter, Rosario Duque-Pobre, who visited Chicago recently.

The Duque siblings have kept all their father's memorabilia in their house, which has become a museum of antique pieces—from an old piano



THE octagonal Duque House in Paoay, Ilocos Norte.
CRISTINA ARZADON

to a phonograph and other wooden furnishings.

Lining the walls are early family photos, including a sketch of the house done by Duque's granddaughter, Marissa.

The family plans to replicate the sketch in small keepsakes that could be given as souvenirs to tourists on a heritage trip.

Promise

Dugan said restoring the house was a promise she made to her father before he died.

"I wanted to bring back my father to Chicago, while he was on a visit in Australia. But he never had that

chance because he was in a hurry to go back to the Philippines. I have since promised to restore the house as my way of making up for him," she said.

Mindful of the attention that their house had attracted, the Duque siblings have started planning its rehabilitation, keeping in mind the need to preserve the original structure.

Termires have destroyed some sections, while wooden planks need to be replaced or reinforced. Except for some portions of the facade, the original structure, including the wooden floors, has not been disturbed.

Several flights of the stone staircase leading to the front door have

sunk. Only sections of the pillars are seen on each side.

The basement has traces of hardened mud from recent floods, attracting termites, Dugan said.

Restoration

The family had already commissioned a restoration architect to repair sections of the house.

Since talks about the restoration spread, Dugan said seven architects had shown up with their designs Dugan had narrowed down her list to two.

"I could barely recognize our house," she said playfully as she showed two designs, which transform the house into a Spanish colonial villa capped by roof tiles.

Dugan clarified reports that the National Historical Institute had offered to help in the restoration of the heritage house. "Nobody has come forward to help in the restoration. There has been no offer, which we don't really mind," she said.

"And in case there will be one, we will like to see the guidelines first. We don't want to lose control of our house where we will be reduced to mere administrators," Dugan said.

She clarified, however, that the house was always open to people who shared their passion in taking pride of their ancestral home.

At one point, Irene Marcos-Araneta, youngest daughter of the late President Ferdinand Marcos, surprised the household members when she went up the staircase and asked politely if she could tour the house.

"We have always opened our house to everyone who cares to take a look. We don't mind the attention. Anytime of the day, we see people outside the house either taking shots or filming the structure. We share the pride to others who would want to make a connection and a sense of ownership to this house that our father built," Dugan said.

Clan reunions or village feasts?

By Delmar Carino
Bakun, Benguet

FOR BENGUET'S indigenous peoples, a clan reunion means more than holding a feast to gather family members and butcher pigs.

The reunions, according to elders of Bakun town, are part of a tradition aimed at strengthening family ties and keeping intact a long line of native ancestry.

This summer, just like in previous summers, saw Bakun and the rest of the province's 12 towns play host to a lot of clan reunions. Family members who represented up to the fifth generation attended.

No exact figures are available, nor even from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), on how many reunions were held in the province. But if the announcements on radio station dzWT of Mt. Province Broadcasting Corp. in Baguio City were to be the basis, the number peaked this summer.

Rose Malekhan, a dzWT reporter and anchor, said 195 announcements for clan reunions had flooded the station's public service hour from February to May. In April alone, she said, the station's hour-long public service just could not air all announcements.

3 reasons

Dr. Eufronio Pungayan, an ethnolinguist, said clan reunions were usually held for three reasons—"ilaw" or the yearning to meet and be together with relatives, the sincere desire to gather all relatives for a feast, and the political agenda of some organizers.

The first two are quite difficult as a "mangotan" (kinship tracer) would be needed, said Pungayan, who also teaches at the Saint Louis University in Baguio. The "kinship tracer" is tasked with finding the origin of the clan and establishing the various generations that descended from it, he said.

Today, however, reunions are sometimes used to determine one's political base for future elections, he said.



Rich man's feast

He said modern day reunions in the province were actually modifications of the age-old tradition of "pesher" or "pudir," otherwise known as the rich man's feast. In this event, he said the "kakangyan" or "kadangjan" (rich man) calls for all his relatives to share his blessings.

The practice is inherited by incoming generations and this could become burdensome, he said.

The practice dates back to the 16th century, according to the 1985 book, "A People's History of Benguet," by Zenaida Hamada Pawid and Anavie Bagamaspad.

The pesher is a "feast where pigs are butchered upon the instruction of an unnamed god to a favored mortal for the purpose of sharing his bounty to his neighbor," Pawid and Bagamaspad said.

Lawyer Leilene Marie Carantes-Gaillard, NCIP director in the Cordillera, agreed with Pungayan that today's clan reunions had become variations of the old rich man's feast.

Today, all families in the clan are required to contribute for the food and drinks to be served, thus unloading the burden of the wealthy family member in shouldering alone the cost of the reunion, she said.

A reunion may not be as elaborate as the "kanyaw" (or carizo), a feast of song and dance, but clan members have welcomed the affair since it has helped them learn genealogy and es-

Establish a family tree

The officers of the clan will also have to learn how to make their constitution and by laws, said Alfredo Alangdeo, a vegetable trader from Bakun and president of the Tayo-o clan.

Way of life

Alangdeo said the clan's younger generations had already gained some insights on their elders' way of life. Among them are their ancestors' preference for big families as family planning was then nonexistent, most of their ancestors have single names, and extended families are allowed.

This explains why clan reunions could gather so many families and that making a family tree "is actually making a thick book," he said, adding.

"In fact, we have learned that bearing illegitimate children was then allowed especially among wealthy families."

The Tayo-o reunion on April 9 was just one of the five clan gatherings held in Bakun this summer. Around 200 families belonging to the clan attended, Alangdeo said.

Those who came to attend represented up to the fourth generation, he said.

The Lovenie-Molntas clan of Kappangan town also had its 25th reunion on May 6. The venue had to be the President Fidel Ramos Gymnasium in Baguio City because of the number of families who came.

"Every time we hold the reunion, more and more people are attending," said Susan Dawang, one of the clan officers.

Reunions are usually held in a day although some hold it for more than two days. The families usually choose public school grounds as venue to accommodate participants, Alangdeo said.

Those who attend must register with their respective clans identified by colored ribbons. After an opening program, they are presented.

A grand lunch follows. For some, sports activities are held in the afternoon. To cap the event, officers are elected and the place of the next meeting is agreed upon.

Officials and would-be politicians have all reasons to smile when attending their own clan reunions. The number of families present would mean sure votes, Pungayan said.



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Bali-type blasting caps seized

NBI probes maker's links to Jemaah Islamiyah, terrorist bombing attacks

By Margaux C. Ortiz

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED A MAN CAUGHT manufacturing blasting caps similar to the ones used in the Rizal Day bombings that killed 22 people and wounded 120 others in various parts of Metro Manila in 2000 and in the terrorist attack that claimed the lives of 189 people in the Indonesian island resort of Bali two years later.

The National Bureau of Investigation identified the alleged explosives manufacturer as Rodolfo Arahan, whom it presented to the media yesterday, four days after his arrest during a raid on his house and shop in Barangay Hulugan, Tanza, Cavite, last Friday.

"We are now determining his possible linkage to the Jemaah Islamiyah because the blasting caps he made were identical to those used in the Rizal Day and Bali bombings," NBI acting director Nestor Mantaring told reporters.

Seized from the 45-year-old suspect, who claimed he manufactured blasting caps for dynamite fishing only, were big plastic bags of highly explosive TNT, potassium nitrate, picric acid, pentameric acid, tetranitrate and low explosive black powder along with 37 blasting caps, 247 blasting cap casings, 23 time fuses, metal sheet cutters and molding machines, officials said.

"All these chemicals combined are enough to destroy a quarter of the whole NBI headquarters," said Romeo Cointingo, an NBI explosives expert.

Two weeks ago, NBI detectives posing as buyers obtained from Arahan a bottle of ammonium nitrate mixed with kerosene that is often used in blast fishing, the officials said.

Carlo Valdez, chief of the NBI's Anti-Terrorism Division, said they had received information that Arahan "sells his products to clients in Basilan and Jolo," known lairs of the Abu Sayyaf Group that is linked to the Southeast Asian terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah.

Vasquez said the NBI was coordinating with the Australian Federal Police to determine the similarities between the substances used in the Bali bombing and those seized in the Cavite raid. Arahan denied the accusations, saying that "Visayan friends" gave him the explosives materials.

The NBI said charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives have been filed against Arahan.

Makati judge firm on decision to inhibit herself

By Tarra V. Quismundo

MAKATI JUDGE JENNY LIND ALDECOA DELORINO has stood pat on her decision to voluntarily recuse herself from the rebellion cases against party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran and rebel soldier 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan.

On Monday, Delorino denied an appeal from Beltran that she reconsider her May 10 decision to inhibit herself from the case, which resulted in the case being transferred to another judge.

In her May 10 order, the judge voluntarily inhibited herself from the case, saying she did not want to cause delays in proceedings as she expected state prosecutors to always cast doubt on her impartiality.

The Department of Justice had asked Delorino to let go of the case on the ground that she was biased after the judge rejected their proposal to include 46 new accused in the rebellion case, alleging a conspiracy between rebel soldiers and communist rebels to overthrow the administration President Macapagal Arroyo.

"The judge maintains that even in the absence of bias or partiality on her part, there are other just and valid reasons which, in conscience, have guided her to exercise the better part of discretion by voluntarily inhibiting herself from this case. Let it not be said, however, that she succumbed to any extraneous pressure for, indeed, there was none," Delorino said.

The judge ordered that the court records be immediately transferred to the sala of Makati RTC Judge Encarnacion Moya, who was designated to take over the rebellion case after it was again raffled off on May 15.

Delorino threw out on May 4 the modifications that the DOJ had made on the original case—which sought to include party-list legislators Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Castillo and Joel Villador of Bayan Muna, Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis, Liza Maza of Gabella and 41 others—saying she found that the amended case contained new theories and new facts which could not supplant the original case against Beltran and San Juan.



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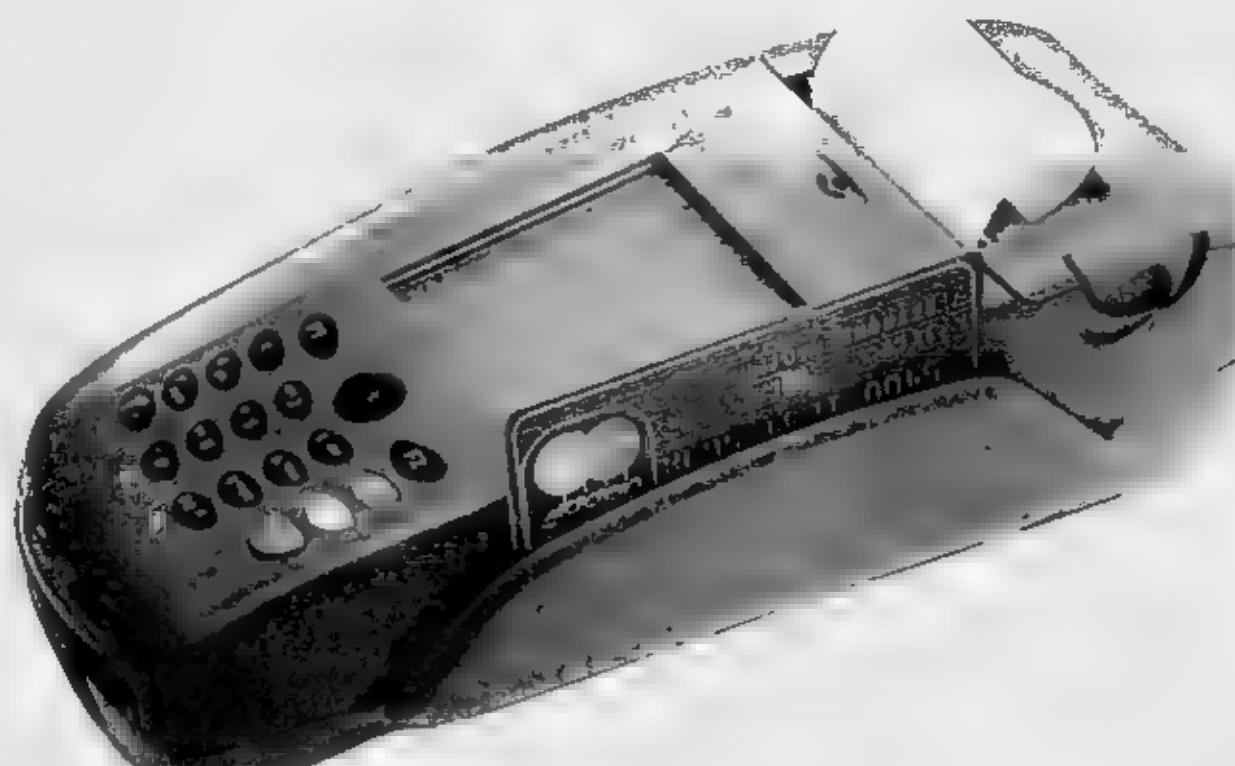
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The WORLD

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Amnesty accuses US, Britain of war on terror abuses

LONDON—AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL on Tuesday accused the United States and its main ally Britain of jettisoning human rights in the wars they have declared against terrorism.

In its annual report, Amnesty lashed out at the US government for holding thousands of people without charge or trial in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba, since the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States.

The London-based human rights group also took British Prime Minister Tony Blair's government to task for its security crackdown following the July 7, 2005 suicide attacks in London that killed 56 people, including the four bombers.

"Measures purporting to counter terrorism led to serious human rights violations, and concern was widespread about the impact of these measures on Muslims and other minority communities," the report said.

The developments were part of a broader trend, it added.

"The (British) government continued to erode fundamental human rights, due rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, including by persisting with attempts to undermine the ban on torture at home and abroad, and by enacting and seeking to enact legislation inconsistent with domestic and international human rights law," it said.

The report referred to an antiterrorist law adopted in March, before the bombings, which allow the government to use secret documents to impose "control or-

ders" that sharply restrict the movement and communications of suspects who have not been tried.

A new law was adopted at the end of the year which extended the time that suspects could be detained without charge from 14 days to 28 days.

However, it noted that the British parliament rejected a more draconian proposal to extend detention periods to 90 days.

It also denounced the British government for striking agreements with Jordan, Libya and Lebanon that allow for sending security suspects to those countries based only on diplomatic assurances that they

would not be mistreated.

It accused the Blair government of allowing the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to use British territory to transfer security suspects between countries, outside any legal framework.

And it accused the British authorities of breaching international and domestic human rights law "through its role in the internment without charge of at least 10,000 people in Iraq." The United States—which has received loyal support from Britain in its war on terror following the September 2001 attacks—was charged by Amnesty with human rights abuses not only in known jails but also in "secret" prisons. AFP

2,148 executed in 2005

LONDON—AT LEAST 2,148 PEOPLE were executed in 2005 despite the majority of the world's countries having abolished the death penalty in law or in practice, Amnesty International said Tuesday.

In its annual report on the state of the world's human rights, Amnesty said that at least another 5,186 people were sentenced to death last year, though "the true figures were certainly higher."

Amnesty said 122 countries have now abolished capital punishment in law or in practice. Some 86 of those countries have got rid of the death penalty for all crimes.

Executioners used various means,

including hanging, firing squads, lethal injections and beheading. Among those put to death were children and people with mental disabilities, Amnesty said. Ninety-four percent of executions took place in China, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United States.

Drug smuggling, embezzlement and fraud were some of the crimes for which capital punishment was imposed, Amnesty said. Mexico and Liberia abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 2005, Liberia being the last to do so in September.

Amnesty raised its particular concern over the inherent risk of executing innocent people. AFP

Air raid kills 80 Taliban, 16 civilians in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR—UP TO 80 TALIBAN rebels and at least 16 civilians were killed Monday during a coalition air and ground attack on a village in southern Afghanistan, officials and witnesses said.

The US-led coalition said it called in warplanes after troops who were trying to capture insurgents in Kandahar province came under fire, while a governor said some of the militants had hidden in local people's houses.

Bloodied men, women and children who streamed into a nearby hospital using vehicles that withstood the bombing said dozens of civilians died and scores more were wounded.

The air strike came amid some of the worst violence since the 2001 fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Around 300 people have been killed in the past week, about twice the number reported killed in Iraq.

"Coalition forces conducted a significant operation early this morning in the Kandahar region near the village of Azizi that resulted in the unconfirmed deaths of possibly up to 80 Taliban members," a coalition statement said.

There were 20 confirmed deaths among "active members of the Taliban network" and 60 unconfirmed fatalities in the operation, the third

in the area in a week.

"The purpose of this morning's operation was to detain individuals suspected of terrorist and anti-Afghanistan activities. However, during the operation, coalition forces encountered organized armed opposition," it said.

"Ground and close air support assets engaged the extremists, who were firing on coalition troops and endangering innocent civilians," the statement added.

The coalition said it was investigating reports of civilian deaths. Its troops "only targeted armed resistance, compounds and buildings known to harbor extremists," the statement said.

Kandahar provincial governor Asadullah Khalid told reporters that at least 16 civilians were killed and 15 wounded in the attack.

"There were reports that the Taliban were in this village but when the US planes started bombardment the Taliban used the people's houses as a front—that's why there were civilian casualties," Khalid said at the main hospital in Kandahar city, 35 km east of the bombed

An elderly man, Attai Mohammad, told an AFP correspondent at the hospital that 24 members of his family, including some children, were killed in the bombing. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

Suharto bleeding internally

JAKARTA—Indonesia's former dictator Suharto was bleeding internally in the stomach Tuesday and his condition appeared to be worsening, doctors said. Suharto, 84, was hospitalized two weeks ago for colon surgery and has undergone several minor operations since then. Mardjo Subiantono, the chief presidential doctor, told reporters the ex-strongman started bleeding in the stomach again late Monday. "We are giving him medication to try to stop the bleeding," he told a news conference, adding that Suharto's health appeared to be deteriorating. "We will conduct an endoscopy to locate the source of the bleeding," Subiantono said. Suharto looked "weak and pale." AP

14 killed in attacks in Iraq

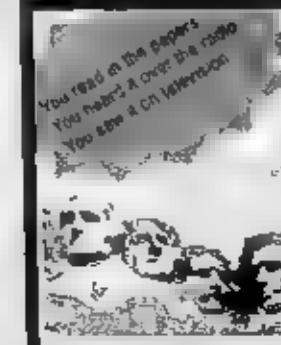
BAGHDAD—Drive-by shootings killed seven Iraqis and wounded eight on Tuesday as they headed to work. At 8 a.m., gunmen riding in an Opel sedan car shot and killed four ironsmen riding a pickup truck to work in Mosul, said police Brig. Abdul-Hamid Khalaf. At about 5:30 a.m., a drive-by shooting at a minibus killed three Iraqi day laborers going to work at a farm near Baqouba. Also on Tuesday, a car bomb exploded in New Baghdad, killing five Iraqis—two police commandos and three civilians. Nazar Gadir, 39, a high school teacher on his way to work near Kirkuk was killed in a drive-by shooting. In Baghdad, gunmen in a speeding car killed one vendor selling cigarettes. AP

Bird flu kills two in Iran

TEHRAN—Two people have died in Iran showing possible symptoms of the bird flu virus, a health official in the northwestern province of Kermanshah said Monday, quoted by the news agency ISNA. "Four people have been hospitalized, among them a woman and her husband who have died. There are suspicions of bird flu symptoms," said the head of the university hospital in the city. "Their tests have been sent to medical centers inside the country and abroad to clarify the issue," said the official, named only as Dr. Izadi. AP

Strong earthquake hits Indonesia

JAKARTA—A strong earthquake struck in eastern Indonesian waters early Tuesday, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, meteorological officials said. The epicenter of the 6.0-magnitude quake was 10 km beneath the Banda Sea, and about 180 km southwest of Ambon, the capital of Maluku province, the US Geological Survey said. Indonesian officials put the magnitude of the quake, which hit at 5:53 a.m. (0653 GMT Monday) at 5.5. The reason for the discrepancy, which was not immediately clear, is that residents in Ambon said they did not feel anything, said Arief Akbar, an official at the Meteorological and Geophysics Agency in Jakarta, adding that no damage or casualties were reported. AP



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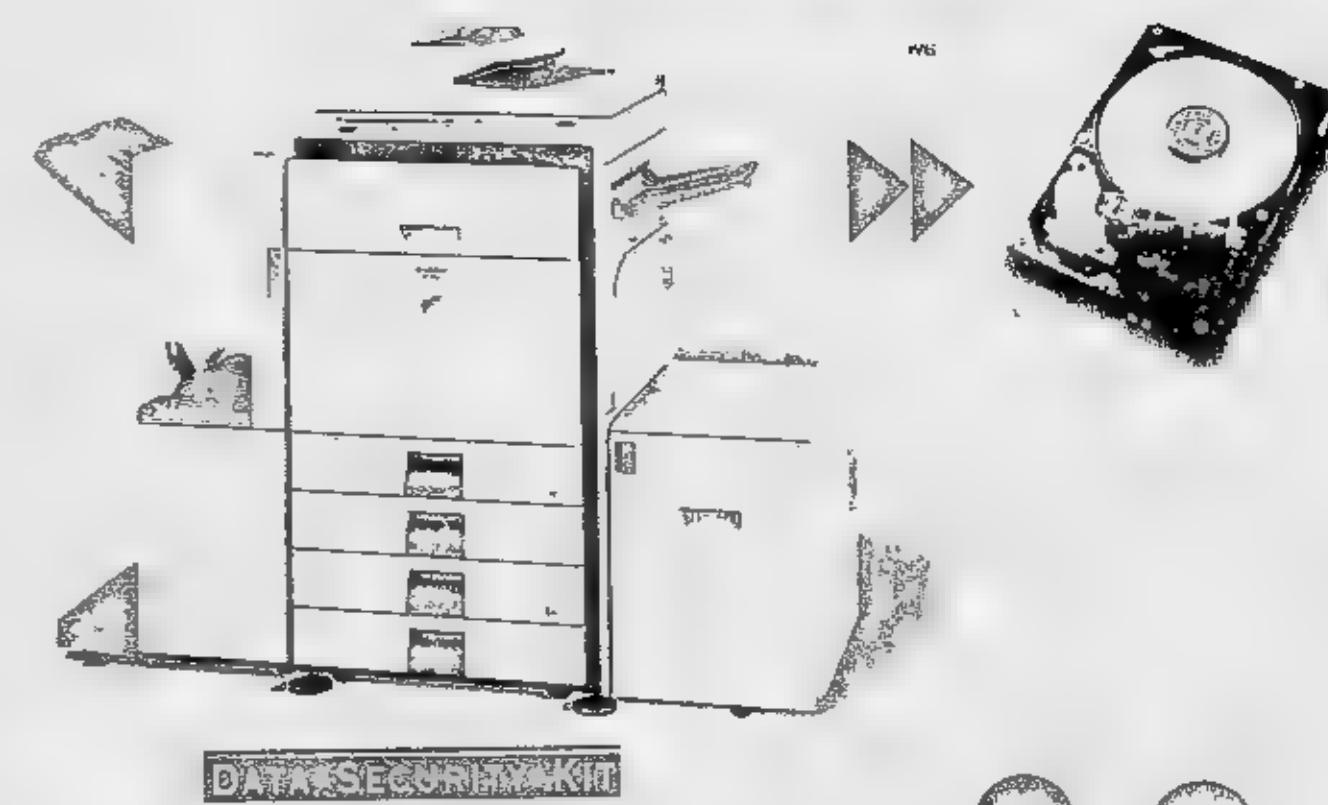
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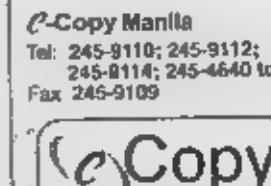


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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Thaksin stages comeback, takes control of Thai gov't

BANGKOK—THAI PRIME MINISTER THAKSIN SHINAWATRA staged a political comeback Tuesday, leading his first cabinet meeting since stepping aside seven weeks ago following street protests and controversial polls.

"I have fully returned to work," Thaksin said as he entered government house, adding that he would lead all cabinet meetings from now on.

Thaksin's return came amid uncertainty over when new elections could be held after the courts declared last month's snap polls invalid, and despite the threat of renewed protests against him.

The billionaire businessman returned to lead a caretaker government with Thailand expecting court-supervised elections later this year, possibly in October.

Prommin Lertsuindej, the prime minister's secretary, insisted that Thaksin had the legitimacy to take back the reins of government after the courts nullified the April 2 election.

The majority of people are still confident in Thai Rak Thai and want Prime Minister Thaksin to carry out his duties. This is our political legitimacy," he told reporters.

Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party won last month's elections with 56 percent of the vote, but the victory was undermined by an opposition boycott that succeeded in convincing millions of voters to cast protest votes.

He stepped aside two days later, but never formally resigned. The elections left Thailand without a functioning parliament, and earlier this month the courts stepped in to clear up the chaos—invalidating the elections and ordering new polls.

But new polls look months away, with election authorities mired in controversy, which Thaksin's aides said forced the prime minister to return to office to prevent a political vacuum from hurting the economy.

"Frankly speaking, Thaksin has returned to work and there's nothing abnormal about it," Prommin said.

Thaksin's rivals disagreed, and raised the specter of new street protests like the ones

that rattled Bangkok for months before he stepped aside.

The People's Alliance for Democracy, which spearheaded the protests, said Thaksin could not credibly run the country.

"He no longer has the legitimacy to work as the country's leader. He not only has ethical problems, but now also lacks any credibility," PAD spokesperson Suriyasa Katsasila told AFP.

"We will resume our campaign against him next month, after the celebrations for the king's 60th anniversary on the throne," he said.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the world's longest-reigning monarch, will celebrate his anniversary with royalty from 30 countries on June 12-13.

The leading opposition party also accused Thaksin of backtracking on his promise to step aside.

"He has no right to go back to work. He has not answered any of the charges against him" over corruption and conflicts of interest, Democrat Party spokesperson Ong-art Kampaiboon told AFP.



JAPANESE mountaineer Takako Arayama, 70, leads other climbers on the way to the top of Mount Everest May 17. Arayama is the oldest person to scale the world's highest peak from the Tibetan side.

REUTERS

Japanese is oldest man to scale Everest

KATHMANDU—A 70-YEAR-OLD JAPANESE climber believed to be the oldest man to scale Everest marked the achievement by leaving a photograph of his dog on the summit, he told reporters Tuesday.

Takao Arayama, aged 70 years and 225 days when he topped the world's highest mountain last Wednesday, beat the record held by a fellow countryman by just three days.

Arayama, who confessed to suffering headaches and breathing difficulties during the oxygen-aided ascent, said it was a wonderful feeling when he finally reached the top of the 8,848-meter mountain.

"I am very happy to be the oldest man to scale the world's highest peak," the fit-looking and ruddy-cheeked Arayama said on his return to Nepal's capital Kathmandu.

The previous record holder was Yuichiro Miura, a professional skier, who made it to the summit of Everest in May 2003 aged 70 years and 222 days, according to Guinness World Records.

"I stayed for 30 minutes on the top of the mountain and took some pictures and left a picture of my dog, Pacu," said the married father of two.

"It was a wonderful feeling. Everything was below me, all the mountains and the world, when I reached the top," he said.

Arayama, a corporate management consultant from Kamakura, south of Tokyo, was part of an 11-person team that included six Nepalese Sherpas and five Japanese climbers.

He first climbed an 800-meter mountain near Tokyo at the age of 12 that inspired him to continue his obsession.

ARAYAMA

REUTERS

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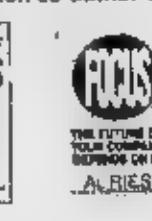
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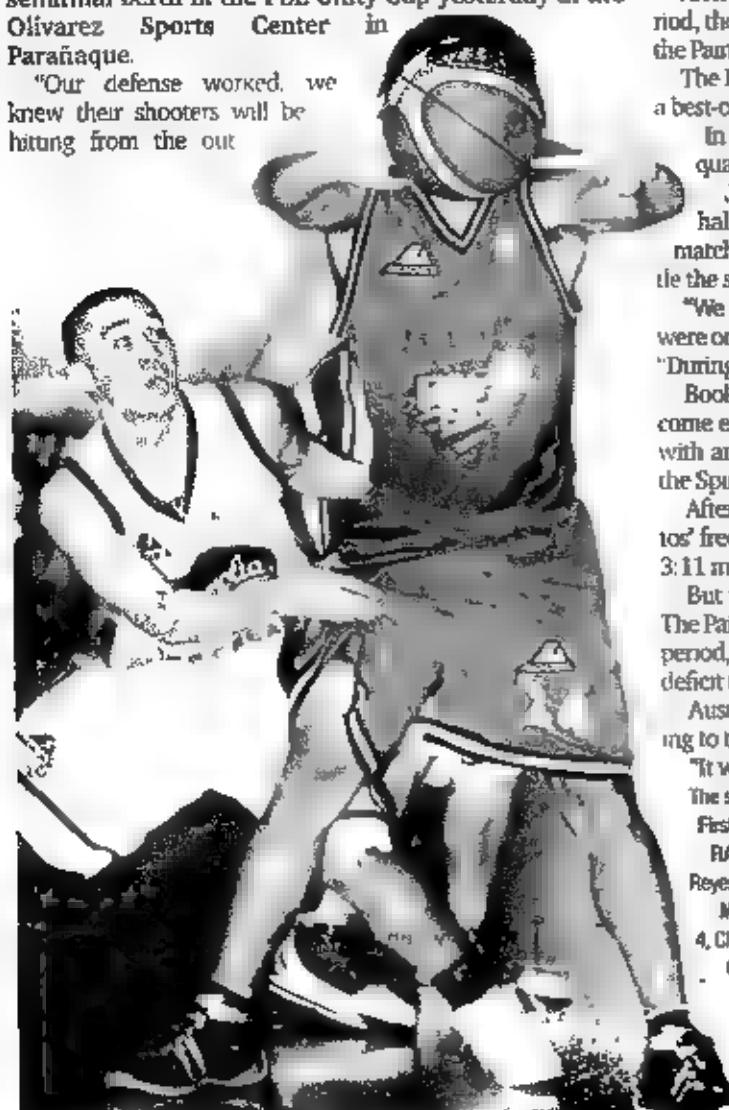
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Painters advance; Tortillos stopped

By Jasmine W. Payo

TAKING FULL CONTROL AT THE DEFENSIVE END, RAIN or Shine shut down Magnolia Ice Cream in the last three minutes to post a 65-60 victory and secure a semifinal berth in the PBL Unity Cup yesterday at the Olivarez Sports Center in Paranaque.

"Our defense worked, we knew their shooters will be hitting from the out-



RONJAY Envie (right) of Rain or Shine tosses a pass out of a Magnolia defensive trap led by Kim Valenzuela. ERICK ARAZAS

side," said Painters coach Leo Austria. "Everyone stepped up including Gilbert Malabanan and Jay-R Reyes, who showed again that he can finish games."

After Jojo Tangkay shot 13 of his 15 points in the second period, the trio of Malabanan, Reyes and Ronjay Envie took over the Painters' offensive charge in the second half.

The Painters will clash against the top ranked Toyota Otus in a best-of-five semifinal series starting Saturday.

In the second game, Harbour Centre extended its own semifinal series against Granny Goose with a 59-51 win.

Joseph Yeo drilled in all of his 16 points in the second half to lead the Portmasters to a knockout semifinal match versus the Tortillos on Thursday. The winner will battle the second-seeded Montaña Jewels.

"We played a poor first half, we only had one assist, but we were only down by two," said Portmasters coach Jorge Galent. "During the halftime break I told them to share the ball more."

Booking their sixth straight semifinal appearance didn't come easy for the Painters. Heading into the final six minutes with an eight point lead, 57-49, Arwind Santos spearheaded the Spinners' comeback to tie the contest at 58.

After Envie put the Painters on top with a triple, 61-58, Santos' free throws again made it a one-point game, 61-60, with 3:11 minutes remaining.

But that turned out to be the final basket for the Spinners. The Painters trailed by as many as 10 points early in the second period, 15-25, before Tangkay almost singlehandedly cut the deficit to three points, 32-35, at the half.

Austria noted that the Painters finally evened it up after losing to the Spinners in the finals series last conference.

"It was a good revenge for us," said Austria.

The scores:

First Game

RAIN OR SHINE 65—Tangkay 15, Malabanan 13, Envie 11, Olivarez 7, Reyes 6, Yambo 5, Tan 4, Catalu 2, Eman 2, Sta. Maria 0.

MAGNOLIA 60—Santos 15, Williams 15, Valenzuela 9, Rizada 8, Misolas 4, Chan 3, Almeda 2, Isip 2, Co 2, Te 0, Jones 0.

Quarters: 15-10, 32-35, ■■■■■

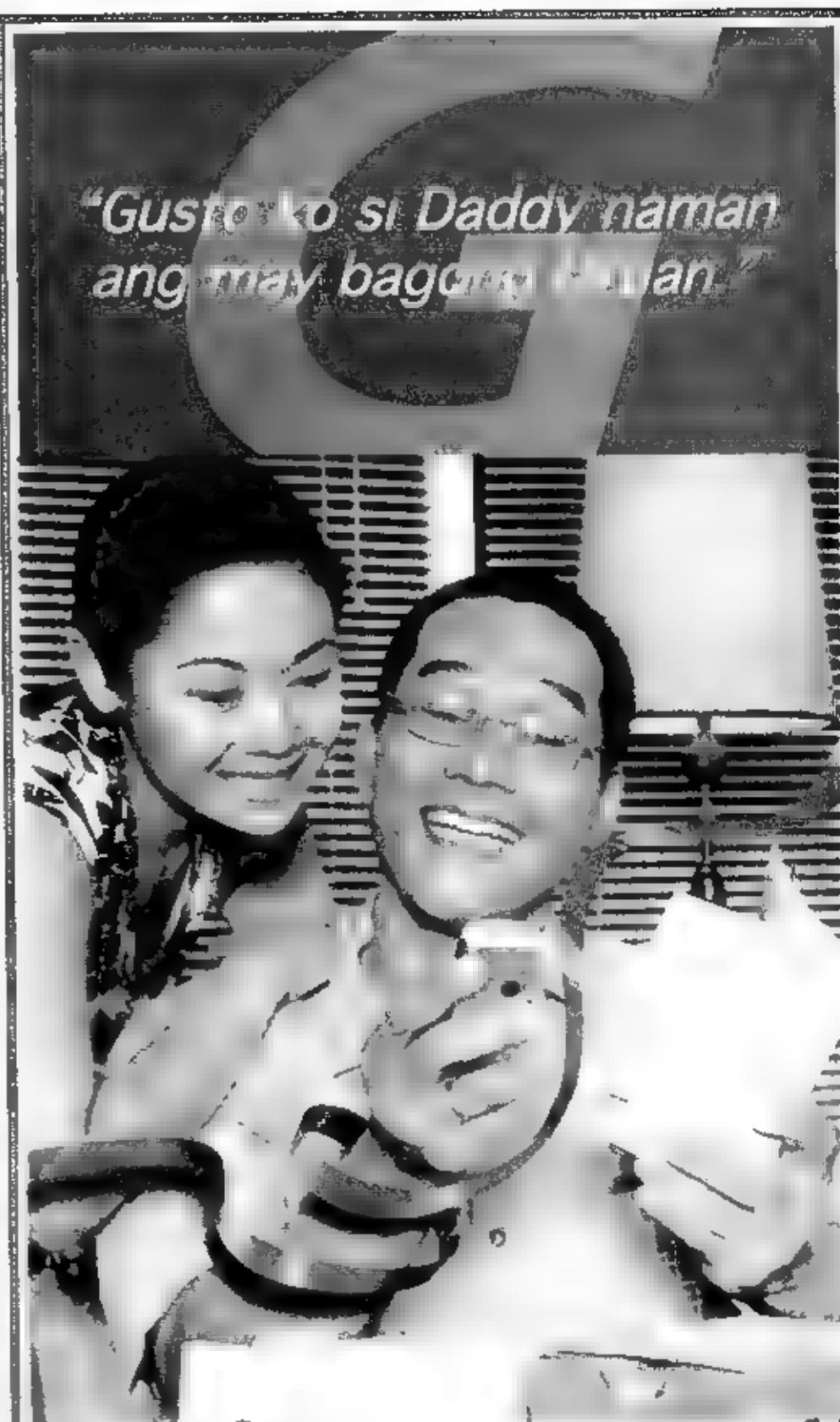
Second Game

HARBOUR CENTRE 59—Yeo 16, Chia 9, Tenorio 9, Bamboo 8, Maierhoffer 6, Reyes 3, Aran 3, Alman 2, Lande 2, Coching 1, Gax 0.

GRANNY GOOSE 51—Quisahan 14, Cruz 9, Santos 8, Latonio 6, Almad 5, Itabes 4, Farer 3, Concha 1, Grijalvo 1, David 0, Gavino 0, Saldua 0, Dafa Pafa 0.

Quarters: 22-17, 22-24, 43-35, 59-51

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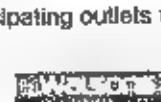
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Dimakiling lone
victor; Filipinas
clobber Irish bets

By Roy Luarca



SO: Winning line missed

TURIN, ITALY—THE PHILIPPINE MEN'S team got stalled while the women's squad rebounded in the second round of the 37th Chess Olympiad here Monday.

Only Fide Master Oliver Dimakiling was able to extract the full point as the Filipinos settled for a 2-2 tie against Luxembourg at the Olympic Village venue.

The Filipinas, on the other hand, squeezed out a 3-0 rout over Ireland to recover from the 2.5-0.5 beating dealt them by the Germans in round 1.

Men's team captain Sammy Estimo told his wards to forget about the buried opportunity against Luxembourg which is ranked 63rd, lower than the Philippines' 35th seed.

The Philippines should have beaten Luxembourg, but two-time national champion Darwin Laylo dropped a "won" game against Internazionale Master Mieczyslaw Bakalarz in 70 moves a Grunfeld with some weak moves.

straight Olympiad when he takes on GM Alexander Onischuk (2650) on board 2.

Antonio will be pitted against GM Hikaru Nakamura (2664) while Dimakiling (2452), who has won his first two games, will go up against GM Varuzhan Akobian (2575) on board 4.

Though the Filipinos have never beaten the Americans in six Olympiad meetings, the scores have always been close.

The Americans triumphed in 1980 (Valletta), 1984 (Thessaloniki), 1988 (Thessaloniki), 2000 (Istanbul) and 2002 (Bled), all by 2.5-1.5 scores. The Filipinos managed a 2-2 draw in the 1974 Nice Olympiad.

In the ditz side, Woman International Master-elect Sheenie Joy Lombao beat Suzanne Connolly in 19 moves of a Pirc, followed by Sherly Cua in 30 moves of a Nizovitch and capped by WIM Beverly Mendez's 61-move Dutch defense victory over Paormima Menon.

With 3.5 points, the Filipinas will take on No. 32 Switzerland in round 3.

Defending champion China and France, both with 6.0 points, collide in the women's division. Co-leaders Lithuania and Latvia also part ways. Russia and Poland, both with 5.5 points, will meet on the third board.

Leader and top seed Russia tackles Germany (7.5) in the featured match of the men's division. Poland and Greece, both with 7.5 points, also part ways.

WORLD CUP

England hopes to lay ghosts of shoot-outs past to rest

LONDON—ENGLAND'S WORLD CUP HOPEFULS are determined to end a tale of woe in penalty shoot-outs that has dogged their country's hopes of trophy success.

England will leave for Germany having known far more agony than ecstasy in a discipline which has come to play a key part in the latter stages of tournament soccer.

Shoot-out misses have condemned England to exits at World Cups in 1990 and 1998, along with Euro 96 on home soil and by hosts Portugal in Euro 2004.

"To go out on penalties is the biggest kick in

the teeth you can have in football at this level," said England midfielder Frank Lampard after trudging off the pitch in Lisbon in 2004.

"We're all devastated."

Keeper David James took his share of the blame for England's exit in the nerve-jangling finale, saying: "I'm gutted that I had seven penalties and I didn't save one."

England will probably have to face its demons to succeed at the finals where games will be very tight after a group stage against Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago and Sweden.

"If we're not prepared for them this time, then

I don't think we ever will be," experienced defender Gary Neville told reporters at a training camp in Portugal.

"We've had so many bad experiences with penalties."

"We know what's going to happen, we know what can happen. We know it's probably going to come to penalties in one of the four knockout games if we're going to go far in this tournament. And we've got to deal with it."

Neville believes it is harder to bear the current generation of keepers, many of whom will have done their homework on the players they are

likely to face.

"I think goalkeepers are more agile and it's getting more difficult to score penalties."

With James relegated to the subs bench in Germany, the weight of responsibility for England will fall squarely on the shoulders of Paul Robinson.

Robinson feels ready and able to cope with a World Cup shoot-out—but is keeping the secret of his preparation very much to himself.

"I have been doing a lot of research and I'll be going into penalty shoot-outs—if and when we come across them—very well prepared," he told reporters.



LAMPARD

Reuters



THE KING leaves his court to the cheers of his minors. League MVP Steve Nash high-fives fans after leading the Phoenix Suns past the LA Clippers and into the next round.

Athletics Mavs, Suns advance

great retires

CASABLANCA, MOROCCO—Four-time 1,500-meter world champion and world record holder Hicham El Guerrouj announced his retirement on Monday, saying that after 16 years of competitive running it was time for a "new life."

A musty-eyed El Guerrouj, 31, who won the 1,500- and 5,000-meter gold medals at the 2004 Olympics, made the announcement at a brief news conference in Casablanca.

"For 16 years, I've done sports. Now I want to start a new life," he told reporters packed into a swanky hotel room.

He thanked friends, family and those involved in his career.

"Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. A thousand thanks," he said in his native Arabic. "I want to say to the Moroccan people that everything is possible."

Besides his four world titles, El Guerrouj holds the world record in the 1,500 meters and the mile, both indoors and outdoors, and ran the fastest ever 2,000.

In Athens, he became the first runner to win both the 1,500 and 5,000 at the Olympics since Finland's Paavo Nurmi in 1924. He had not competed since winning the 5,000 at Athens on Aug. 28, 2004.

El Guerrouj mounted a podium to the strains of melancholy music played over a sound system as video of his races were shown, including his Athens victories.

The athlete did not disclose his future plans.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS—The Dallas Mavericks found a solution for Tim Duncan and San Antonio, surging to a 119-115 win in overtime to halt the Spurs bid for a second straight NBA title.

Dirk Nowitzki, who had 37 points and 15 rebounds, forced overtime with a season-saving three-point play for the Mavs who reached the conference finals for the third time in franchise history.

"We believed it was our time to win this," Nowitzki said.

Dallas, which have never been to the NBA Finals, will face Phoenix in a best-of-seven semifinal series after the Suns eliminated the Clippers, 127-107, in one of two Game 7's on Monday. Dallas hosts Game One on Wednesday.

Dallas narrowly avoided the specter of a catastrophic collapse. After squandering a 3-1 series lead, the Mavericks blew a 20-point second-quarter lead and were one miss away from yet another setback to their Texas-sized nemesis.

Instead, the Mavericks showed the heart that has made the Spurs champions.

They denied San Antonio the chance to



SAN Antonio Spurs' Manu Ginobili (right) fouls Dallas Mavericks' Dirk Nowitzki in the final seconds of Game 7. Nowitzki completed the three-point play to send the game into overtime.

become the ninth team—and second during this postseason—to overcome a 3-1 deficit.

Willing under the demands of defending Duncan—who had a playoff career-high 41 points, 15 rebounds and six assists—the Mavericks faced their first deficit at a terrible time.

Directed by MVP Steve Nash in Phoenix, the Suns sank a team playoff-record 15 three-pointers and won their second game seven of the playoffs.

Nash had 29 points and 11 assists for the second-seeded Suns, who have been pushed to the limit in each of their first two series but have emerged with convincing closing wins on their home floor.

"When the games mean the most that is when it is the most fun," Nash said.

■ NBA on TV: SOLAR SPORTS—Miami vs Detroit, 8 a.m. RPN 9—Miami vs Detroit, 7 p.m.

Duncan passed out of a double-team to Manu Ginobili, whose three-pointer gave the Spurs a 104-101 lead with 32 seconds remaining in regulation and brought a roar from the crowd at the ATT Center, who sensed the completion of a historic comeback.

Nowitzki had other ideas. Instead of setting for one of his patented jumpers, he overpowered a smaller defender on his way to the basket and dropped in a layup while drawing a hard foul from Ginobili. His free throw tied it with 21 seconds to go.

"We had a similar situation in game six," Nowitzki said. "We didn't have a lot of time left, I forced a three and the game was over. This time, I had a clear shot to the basket and a lot of time left."

Directed by MVP Steve Nash in Phoenix, the Suns sank a team playoff-record 15 three-pointers and won their second game seven of the playoffs.

Nash had 29 points and 11 assists for the second-seeded Suns, who have been pushed to the limit in each of their first two series but have emerged with convincing closing wins on their home floor.

"When the games mean the most that is when it is the most fun," Nash said.

■ NBA on TV: SOLAR SPORTS—Miami vs Detroit, 8 a.m. RPN 9—Miami vs Detroit, 7 p.m.

Pumaren not panicking

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

AFTER SIX straight losses in the ongoing PBA conference, Talk 'N Text coach Derick Pumaren should be pressing the panic button.

Although he disagrees that the Phone Pals are now the strongest team on paper, people believe they are and are therefore wondering why they continue to slide down hill.

This expectation, said Derick, must be causing some amount of pressure on the players.

"That was a big trade we just went through. We have four new players (Don Allado, RenRen Rito, Anthony Washington and Patrick Fran) and less than 10 days of practice. The team hasn't gelled and the players are pressured to deliver because of the 'must win' situation we're in. We're playing tight. The element of fun and enjoyment of the game is gone," Derick explained.

As far as attitude is concerned, Derick said he has no problems. Everyone is cooperating.

"Kaya lang, yun na nga, nangangapad pa. The players are still feeling each other out. And remember the new players we acquired were playing major minutes in the team where they came from, as opposed to those players we traded."

No, he's not about to press the panic button." It's not panic that I feel, I'm feeling bad because I've not come through for management, which has given me all the support."

"I know it's going to be tough. We still have to pass the wild card phase. When this team was formed, I was really so excited. I could see their potential, I could see what they can do. It's all just a matter of time," Derick said.

While he does not demand the presence of a standby ambulance stationed at the venue of the Junior PBA league, the prominent father of one of the junior cagers said the PBA should at least assign a standby doctor at the games who can administer first aid in case of an accident.

The father knows whereof he speaks.

During the opening games of the Junior PBA league recently, his young son suffered an accident where his head smashed hard on the floor.

When he got up, the boy felt so dizzy, he could hardly walk straight. His parents were looking for a doctor in the house but there was none.

Fortunately, the PBA squad the boy was playing for was conscientious enough to send its team doctor to look after the needs of its junior cagers.

He immediately came to the rescue of the injured boy, who was unable to return to the bench and had to watch the rest of the game from the sidelines.

The father had planned to write a strong letter to the PBA Commissioner's office, calling their attention on this matter, but I'm not sure if he followed through with his intention.

HOOPVINE: Three former PBA commissioners had a reunion of sorts when the league's first commissioner Leo Prieto celebrated his 82nd birthday with successors Rudy Salud and Jun Bernardino as guests. A reunion among these three is always a happy occasion especially if the topic of conversation is an interesting one. I was recently asked in a radio program what I thought about Eugene Tejada's spinal injury. Was it the result of his fall or the fall of heavyweight Red Bull cager Mick Pennisi, who was thrown off balance and landed on him? It's really hard to tell, all I know is that it was an accident... Eyewitness accounts say Eugene fell on his buttocks the same manner Hollywood actor Christopher Reeve fell from his horse (some say though, that Reeve landed on the top of his head)... Mick, a certified nice guy, was one of the very first people to visit Eugene at the Makati Medical Center where he was confined.

Magic's Howard joins Adidas hoop camp

BEIJING—THE THIRD ANNUAL ADIDAS superstar basketball camp kicks off today with 62 of the best young players from eight countries coming together to learn hoop skills from NBA stars Dwight Howard and T.J. Ford.

The Philippines will be represented by Ateneo's Kevin Gamboa and La Salle-Green Hills' Patrick Fran. They will join players from China, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Australia.

The 62 players will be screened and the

top 10 will be sent to participate in the Adidas superstar camp in the United States.

Aside from hoop skills, the players will also learn more about keeping fit from Wayne Hall, the personal trainer of Houston Rockets superstar Tracy McGrady.

There will also be a coaching course to be handled by coaching legend KC Jones.

Howard, the 2004 top pick in the NBA by the Orlando Magic, and Ford, the speedy Milwaukee Bucks point guard, will share the secrets of their game with the participants.

Barrera is super fit—for retirement

BARE EYE



Recab Trinidad

Barrera would appear like a victim of a sordid mismatch.

In truth, it was Juarez, silver medal winner for the US in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, who became a victim of a mismatch in the hands of two judges.

Barrera, both pathetic and pitiful, should have been taken out on a stretcher, sent straight to the hospital.

Instead, the blasted bogus champ was allowed to slur Manny Pacquiao in a talk with the eminent Larry Merchant.

Barrera said Juarez, with deeper style and more movements, is a whole lot better than Pacquiao.

Barrera, stopped by Pacquiao in the 11th in 2003, proceeded to call Pacquiao limited, one-dimensional.

Sorry, señor, but nobody who knows his boxing would ever buy that cheap claim.

Juarez is not a bad boxer. But one dumb, shallow fighter will always make an ordinary but fit boxer appear sharp and great.

With his condition, the masquerad-

ing Barrera would have been stopped cold by Pacquiao even if the RP prizefighter used only his left hand.

The weary, wasted Mexican must return the stolen crown.

His dumb act against the obscure

Rocky Juarez was a slur on the nobility of true, worthy world champions.

(ASSISTANCE: A timely tip from Manolo "Boy" Gonzales of Mandaluyong: Tune in to the radio program "Kaya Mo Be To," dZRM 1278 kHz every Sunday 2-3 p.m., it's rich in vital information for everybody. In one segment alone, families of OFWs seeking to avail of direct housing loans from the SSS, are given valuable advice. Gonzales, who works under philanthropist Ruperto Tan of Etertor Multi-Resources Corp., a program sponsor, said interested OFWs may text Rene Punzalan for assistance (0919-7349704). Gonzales could be contacted at tel. 532-7021. There's a segment on English proficiency before the program winds up with a 10-minute relaxation session of stress-relieving, energy-recharging exercises. Wow!)

THEY CLAIMED MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA, first Mexican to have made Manny Pacquiao super famous, would be defending his world title.

Barrera was absent for that official chore on Saturday (Sunday morning in Manila) in California.

The fellow who fought the shorter Rocky Juarez was a flabby cop who had stolen the world super featherweight boxing title.

Worse, this dumb fellow was allowed to bash that bogus crown like an official breast badge to con the boxing world.

With his condition, the poseur should have been brought into the ring in a wheelchair.

He looked every soft, slow inch super fit for retirement.

Of course, that over-the-hill fighter they had identified as Barrera lost to Juarez.

No, correction please: The first tally of the scores bared the fight had ended in a draw.

That result officially announced by

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2006

Asuncions out to boost stock

Tough field plunges into action

By Jasmine W. Payo

GIVEN ENOUGH INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE, TOP LOCAL SHUTTLER KENNEVIC ASUNCION said the Philippines could do better in the world rankings.

"Our goal is to go up (the rankings) again," said Asuncion, who dropped to No. 69 with sister Kennevic in the world mixed doubles rankings after going as high as No. 22 last September.

But the Asuncions are expecting to boost their stock again in the Bingo Bonanza Philippine Open Badminton Championships, which starts today at the PhilSports Arena.

"This new tournament is an advantage for us," Asuncion said in a press conference yesterday at Crowne Plaza in Ortigas.

"We've been hoping for better exposure abroad, but we lack funding. Players in other countries compete in at least 10 tour-

nments a year. We compete in only four or five, so this is a big addition for us."

Retired police general Edgar Aglipay, vice president of the Philippine Badminton Association, agreed the tournament will also benefit the country's young players.

"Before, only a few compete outside the country," he said. "Other players will see how they are compared with other players of the world."

Leading the 200 participants from 17 countries are Germany-based Xu Huaiwen, seeded fourth in the world women's singles, and Hafiz Hashim of Malaysia, ranked No. 11 in the world men's singles.

Kennevic said the five-day event will see



BADMINTON association VP Edgardo Aglipay welcomes players and officials as Bingo Bonanza CEO Albee Beritez and IMG VP James White look on.

AUGUST DE LA CRUZ

a mix of veteran and promising players.

"We have up-and-coming players, so we hope to have a better finish," he said.

The Philippine team will also be beefed-up by Lloyd Escos and Mark Alvin Natividad in the men's singles and Irene Chiu

and Karyn Velez in the women's singles.

"Events such as the Philippine Open will help inspire young players to achieve new levels," added James White, vice president for business development of the organizing International Management Group.

Olivarez, Tan Ho gain 2nd round

TOP SEED PABLO OLIVAREZ II ROUTED Michael Tamaya, 6-3, 6-0, yesterday to lead the second-round winners in the boys' 16-under division of the 2006 Head Penn Junior Tennis Tour at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Olivarez will next meet Daniel Bautista, who scored a 6-3, 6-3, victory over Niko Katigbak.

Second seed Joshua Tan Ho breezed past Juan Fidel Regis, 6-0, 6-2, and fourth seed Russell Arcilla Jr. downed Mark Anthony Lizardo, 6-2, 6-1, to also advance to the next round.

Second-round winners in the boys' 14-under division were Kyle Cordero, Mark Cruz, Jovy Barce, Juan Maverick Ribaya, Princeton Gerapuso, Jacob Lagman, John Marie Altuche, Tim Polero, Juan Gabriel Pena, Uriel Comes, Leander Lazaro, Juan Paolo Cansino, Alberto Villamor, Paul Nicole Magaway and Jose Lorenzo Ferrer.

In the girls' 18-under play, Sandra Lagman defeated Rebecca Rabregas, 6-4, 6-4; and Celeste Rafael beat Erranelle Soriano, 6-1, 6-3; to join seeds Bien Zoleta, Jessica Agra, Macy Solon, Stef Dizon and Ivy de Castro in the next round.



OPEN defending champion Adam Le Vesconte lines his putt on No. 4 as teammate Jose "Peping" Cojuangco looks on. RUDY ESPERAS

PRO-AM WIN

Rosales underscores RP Open bid

FILIPINO ACE GERARD ROSALES PROVIDED an optimistic prelude to his Philippine Open bid as his foursome with amateurs Macario Tiu, Raul Santos and Matthew Manotoc routed the Pro-Am yesterday at the fabled East course of Wack Wack in Mandaluyong City.

Rosales, who fell short in the 2005 edition where he finished second to Australian Adam Le Vesconte, powered his Wack Wack team to a 15-under-par 57, beating 22 other squads.

The tournament, co-presented by International Container Terminal Services Inc. and Pagcor, served as the appetizer to the 90th staging of the RP Open, Asia's oldest national golf tournament, which tees off Thursday.

Crowne Plaza, Globe Telecom, Konica Minolta, Motorola, Philcop, Post-Track, Srixon, Sunbolt, U-Bix Corp. and 3636Golf also back the event organized by the Asian Tour.

Two entries from the National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP), bannered by Americans Jason Knutson and Briton Chris Rodgers, settled for runner-up honors.

Knutson, who posted his biggest victory in the 2004 Macau Open, steered his NGAP 1 squad that included Lowell Gopez, Raymund Sangil and Paolo Kagalangan to second place with a 59.

Rodgers' NGAP 2 team with Jun Ibay, Ray and Ricky Velasco actually scored a 59 but settled for third spot after a countback.

Earlier in the day, First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and Wack Wack chair Ben Abalos Sr. hit the ceremonial drives that formally opened the RP Open, 19th leg of the Asian Tour.

Cebu Landmaster forge Visayas final with M. Lhuillier

MANDAUE CITY—CEBU LANDMASTER-TOLEDO turned to its veteran crew at crunch time to escape with a 66-63 win over the Manawi Traders Sunday and advance to the Visayas Division Finals of the ML Kwana Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference at the Mandaue City Cultural and Sports Complex. Toledo swept the best-of-three series, 2-0.

Maui Huelar hit a triple to shatter a 61-61 tie with 37 seconds left, 64-61, but Manawi countered through Kim Calo's layup, 64-63. Carlos Sayon quickly drew a foul from Joseph Guangco, splitting his free throws for a 65-63 count.

Cebu Landmaster will now face the undefeated M. Lhuillier Kwana Padala in a best-of-three series for the Visayas Division crown.

Filipino triumph to the max.

Congratulations Remi Garduee for conquering Mt. Everest.



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Asian club volley unfolds

DEFENDING CHAMPION CHINA BEGINS ITS TITLE-RETENTION drive while the Philippines seeks a morale-boosting win at the start today of the 2006 Hitachi Asian Women's volleyball club championship at the Rizal Coliseum.

China, represented by Tiajin Bridgestone, meets a Thailand club in the second game of the triple bill at 4 p.m., while the Filipinas battle fellow newcomer Indonesia in the last game at 6 p.m.

The first game at 2 p.m. pitting Kazakhstan and Chinese-Taipei will follow the opening ceremony at 1.

Powerhouse Japan plays its first match tomorrow in the six-game

round-robin tournament sponsored by the Philippine Sports Commission, Hitachi and Bayview Hotel.

Led by Most Valuable Player Li Shan and best spiker Wang Li, the Chinese swept all their six assignments last year. Li and Wang are on China's roster for the match against the fifth-seeded Thailand.

"Every team here in Asia has improved a lot, so we're expecting a re-

al tough series here," said Chinese head coach Wang Baoquan through an interpreter.

The Thai belles, Southeast Asia's finest squad, are expected to lean on veterans Patcharee Saengmuang and Amporn Yhapa, who won the best server award last year.

The Filipinas are also expected to have their hands full against the Indonesians in the tourney organized by Philippine Volleyball Federation.

"We expect the Indonesians to play hard," said RP head coach Dante Reyes, who will rely on V-league two-

time MVP Mary Jean Baice and Cher Rose Macatangay. "Our players are ready to take the challenge."

Michelle Laborte, Caroline sisters Michele and Marietta, Shermaine Penano, Anna Piao, Glenda Pinto, Jimmy Mondejar, Jean Espolong, Dahlia Cruz, Christ Latigay and Beverly Boto complete the RP roster.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza will be the guest speaker in the opening ceremony. Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez will do the ceremonial serve.

Braves send Pistons crashing to 9th loss

AMAS, KIDAPAWAN—THE NORTH Cotabato Braves resumed their fiery run in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship Monday by whipping the Laguna-Sta. Rosa Pistons, 88-76, at the provincial capitol gym here.

Five-foot-nine Rex Ligue produced his biggest game so far to help the Braves tie second-running Iligan at 6-3 in the southern division of the tournament.

Ligue finished with a double-double of 16 points and 12 rebounds, two steals and a block for

the Braves of Gov. Manny Piñol.

The Pistons of Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro and Mayor Joey Katindig suffered their ninth consecutive defeat.

The scores:

NORTH COTABATO 88—Ligue 16, Javrod

15, Alafado 13, Dagalan 10, Clar 7, Regalado 5,

Sancet 5, Reyes 5, Elata 4, Bias 4, Tamayo

3, Del Norte 2, Cabanog 1, Martinez 0.

LAGUNA-STA. ROSA 76—Inlao 16,

Almahan 14, Natividad 13, Proceso 12, Nogue

10, Baylon 4, Vivero 3, Nolasco 3, Aquino 1 Sy

1, Mamangon 0, Prior 0, Rada 0.

Quarters: 24-17 38-35, 59-54, 88-76

Northwoods takes on all comers in Ford shoot-out

ROYAL NORTHWOODS GEARS UP FOR ITS much-awaited showdown with 15 other golf clubs in the Ford Nationa

l grand finals, hoping to come up with a strong start

when the event is played on May 25 at The Or

chard and on May 26 at Sta. Elena.

More than the all-expense-paid golfing houday to China staked in the 36-hole championship, the dominating Northwoods bets are racing to prove their worth as the best among the 32-member clubs of the Federation of Golf Clubs Phils. Inc.

Northwoods topped the Lurzon North finals, the second stage of the three-phase series pre-

sented by Ford Motors, at Lusita Golf recently.

With Lyn Mangalabnan firing an 11 under

card, Northwoods ran away with the top honors

in the satellite. Backing up Mangalabnan were

Boy Unson, Arnel Arteche and Ynes del Rosario.

Makati derby gets going

THE A.T.C.Z 3-COCK

derby starts today with

60 fights billed in the

event that kicks off at 5

p.m. at the Makati Colise

um. More than P200,000

will be staked in the

event. Last Monday, the

Ika Mae anity of Butch

Olan topped the Pinoy

Cockers Association of

the Philippines 5-cock

derby. The derby will be

hosted by cocker Ram

Lopez and will be sup

ported by B-Mag Derby

Ac. Meanwhile, the next

event at Makati Coliseum

unfolds on June 3.

SJC cockfest sets 120 tiffs

PROMINENT COCKERS

from the provinces troop

to the San Juan Colise

um for a 5-cock derby

today. A total of 120

fights are scheduled in

the event. Members of

the Gentleman Cocks

Association of the Philip

pines are also joining the

derby to be sponsored

by Saqupan Complexor

3000. Matches start at 2

p.m. Meanwhile, the Su

per Angels 3-cock derb

gets going Monday, May

29 with 50 entries ex

pected. For inquiries, call

725-5369.

210 breeders in bullstag tilt

A TOTAL OF 210 GAME-

fowl breeders have

joined this year's National

Federation of Game-

fowl Breeders National 8-

bullstag derby, according

to NFB president Alcy

Palmaras Jr. The cash

pot is P3 million. The

championship round will

be held starting at 1 p.m.

tomorrow at the Araneta

Coliseum with more than

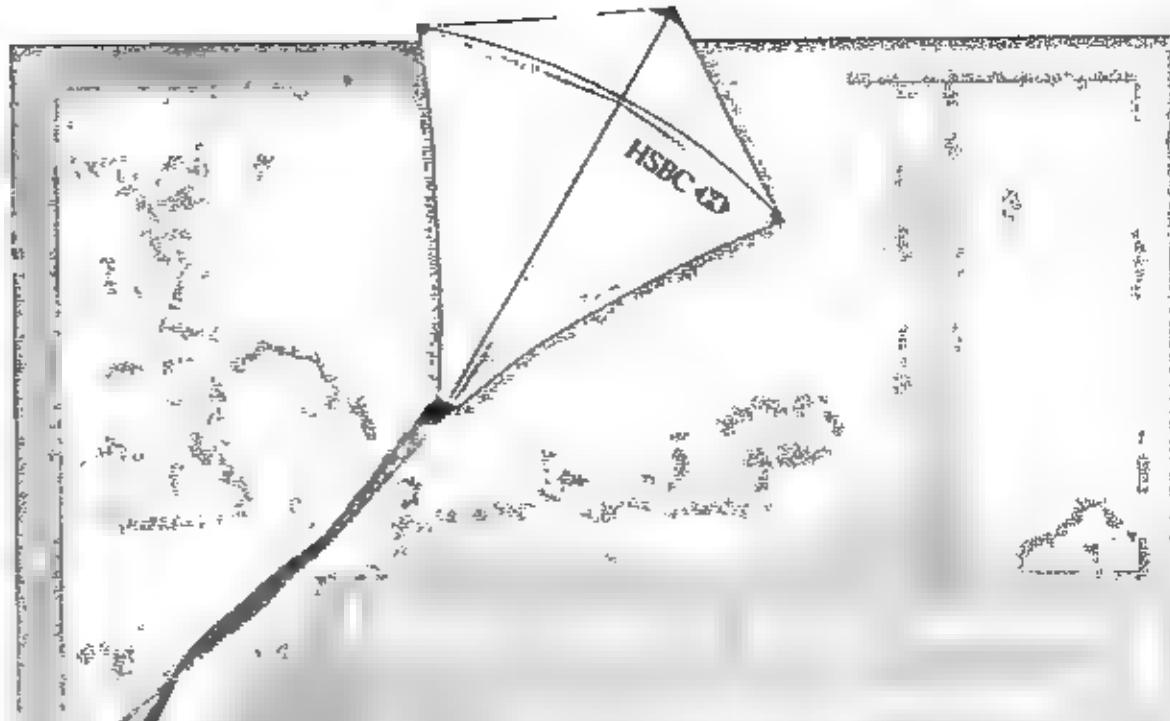
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at the Araneta green

gate. For inquiries, call

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Moment of truth

CHUMS IN THIS PHOTO, Adversaries onstage, Taylor Hicks and Katharine McPhee face off today with three songs each in "American Idol" 2006's final showdown at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood.

On Saturday, Star World arranged an exclusive interview with the man who made gray hair cool this year, and the dazzling LA lady.

Gotta have a gunnuck, they agreed. He might sneak in a harmonica solo or two, Taylor said. Kat revealed she planned to wear a "hot" dress and great shoes.

Story on page A2/6.

FEEDBACK

Correction

From Nicole M. Castillo, marketing manager, Solar Entertainment Corp. for United International Pictures.

Congratulations to Victor Cabrera (general manager of Columbia Pictures) for the successful release of "The Da Vinci Code," but may we correct an error he made in the story "Da Vinci" Murder Mystery Makes a Killing on Opening Day by Bayani San Diego Jr.

"Mission: Impossible III (M.I.III)" grossed P12.7 million on its first day, not P10.1 million, as [Cabrera] stated.

Meanwhile, I'd like to invite the movie-going public to watch two "non-controversial" films, brought to you by Solar-UIP: the G-rated Dreamworks animation "Over the Hedge" (from the makers of "Shrek" and "Madagascar") and the PG-13 rated action blockbuster "M.I.III."

Both films are still going strong nationwide.

From INQUIRER Entertainment:
Castillo confirmed that the figure Cabrera mentioned, P10.1 million, was the opening-day earnings of "M.I.III." in Metro Manila only. Castillo said Cabrera should have included the nationwide earnings of "M.I.III." P12.7, since he was comparing it to the

FEEDBACK/A2-2

A2-1

Editor Errnie G. Velarde

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2 X-MEN 3 7 THE DA VINCI CODE

3 X-MEN 3 8 X-MEN 3

4 THE DA VINCI CODE 9 POSEIDON

5 THE DA VINCI CODE 10 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3

ERMITA

1 X-MEN 3

2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 5 X-MEN 3

3 OVER THE HEDGE 6 THE DA VINCI CODE

4 X-MEN 3 7 POSEIDON

METRO EAST

1 X-MEN 3 5 THE DA VINCI CODE

2 X-MEN 3 6 THE DA VINCI CODE

3 POSEIDON 7 X-MEN 3

4 OVER THE HEDGE 8 X-MEN 3

NOVALICHES

1 X-MEN 3 4 THE DA VINCI CODE

2 X-MEN 3 5 OVER THE HEDGE

3 THE DA VINCI CODE 6 POSEIDON

4 OVER THE HEDGE 7 X-MEN 3

CITISQUARE MALABON

1 X-MEN 3 5 THE DA VINCI CODE

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WEDNESDAY,
MAY 24, 2006

ENTERTAINMENT

Rusty provinces, more English improbement
and other boob-tube boobooos

HOST: WHAT IS YOUR HOME PROVINCE known for—what's unusual about it?

Guest: Unlike Manila, its old churches, beautiful natural wonders and slow way of life make it one of the most rusty provinces in the country!

(Ay, kinalawang ang probinsya niya!)

Host: What do you remember most about the '50s and the '60s?

Guest: The food! It was simple but filling and delicious—and quick, also. Especially, the fast Chinese food served at—what was that place?—Mamang Look?

(No, Ma Mon Luk!)

Host: We know that your family is hard-up, so we asked one of our sponsors to give you a four-year college scholarship!

Guest: Naku, salamat po!

Host: Isn't that great? Hindi mo na kailangang maghanap ng trabaho, kasi magiging college graduate ka na!

(Ano daw!?)

Host: Some people say the *masa* has a hard time relating to you because you look rich

Guest: Oh, no, I'm not! I need this job, so I want to make it in show biz. I was not born with a spoon in my mouth!

(-Not even a wooden one?)

Host: Is this a difficult dish to prepare? Will it take long?

Guest chef: No, we can do it fast—it takes but all 30 minutes only to roast! (That fast, huh?)

Host: How can the Philippines compete better in the call center boom?

Guest: Like in our company, we need more English improbement (Look who's talking...)

Host: What was your reaction when you heard that your relative had succeeded in his mission?

Guest: We feeled very happy and proud! (Ay, we feeled!)

Host: When will your new organization have its first meeting?

Guest: We will meet May 16 of this month. (Kulit!)

Host: Do you have a sideline? What is it?

VIEWFINDER



Nestor U. Torre

Host: What are your plans for the future?

Guest: I don't plan. I just do whatever it comes my way! (Quote, unquote!)

Host: Tell us about your next project.

Guest: We're publishing a coffee book table!

(-You mean, a coffee-table book?)

Host: Is your mother still working as a teacher?

Guest: No, she's already retired

(-Untie her, quick!)

'Luneta'

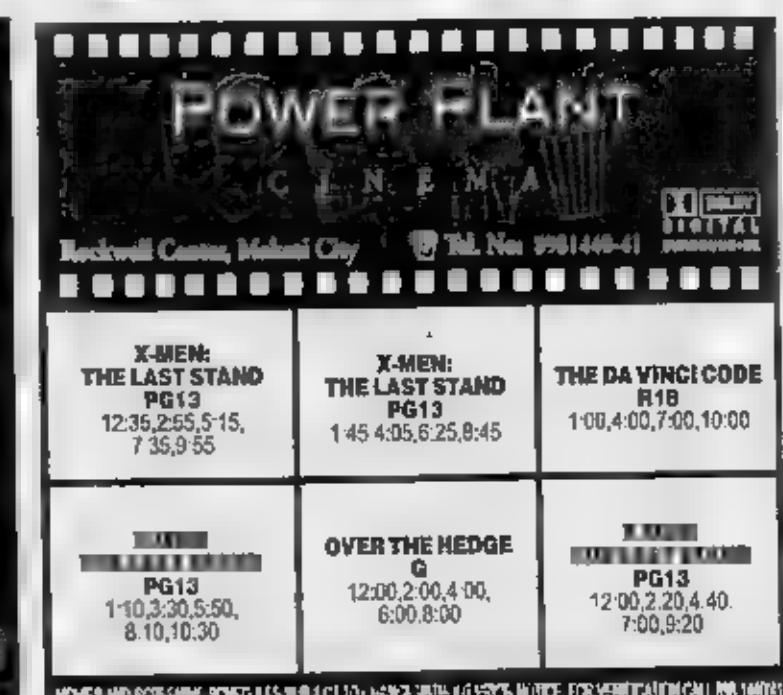
THE 27 PARTICIPANTS in Gantimpala Theater Foundation's annual musical-theater workshop under Roeder Camanag will perform in "Luneta, A Musical Revue," on May 27, 6 p.m., at Rizal Park's open-air auditorium. Call 5280607

Celebrity endorsers

SUN Cellular's postpaid celebrity endorsers, Marc Nelson and Hindy Tantoco, recently visited the Sun Cellular office and The Sun Shop at Robinsons Galleria for the Sun Treat event. The network that pioneered in offering affordable unlimited call and text services is growing briskly.



OVER THE HEDGE	11:20, 1:40, 4:00, 8:00, 9:00 GP
X-MEN 3	12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 8:10, 10:50 PG-13
THE DA VINCI CODE	12:00, 3:30, 7:15, 10:45
1 THE DA VINCI CODE	11:30, 2:45, 5:00, 8:30, 10:30



Movie and screening times are subject to change without prior notice. For verification, call 729-7777.

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

AYALA CENTER CEBU

Ayala Malls
Lorival

glorietta

GREENBELT

AT THE CINEMAS

TEX

G1	1 THE DA VINCI CODE	2 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	3 THE DA VINCI CODE	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND
G4	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 THE DA VINCI CODE	3 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND
GB1	1 THE DA VINCI CODE	2 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	3 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND
GB3	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 12:00, 2:45, 5:00, 9:45 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 13:00, 3:45, 6:00, 9:45 GUARANTEED SEATS	3 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 12:00, 2:45, 5:00, 9:45 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 THE DA VINCI CODE 12:00, 2:45, 5:00, 9:45 GUARANTEED SEATS
ATC	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	3 THE DA VINCI CODE	4 OVER THE HEDGE
ACC	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 THE DA VINCI CODE	3 THE DA VINCI CODE	4 THE DA VINCI CODE
M2	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 THE DA VINCI CODE	3 OVER THE HEDGE	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND
	3 OVER THE HEDGE	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	5 THE DA VINCI CODE	5 THE DA VINCI CODE

At the Activity Center

Alabang Town Center 842 2728; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519Customer Service Tex hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 752 4853; from 11am to 12mn

GLORIETTA

ALABANG
TOWN
CENTERAsia's Nightingale
LANI MISALUCHA in a Special Concert
May 21, 2006American Idol Superstar Trivia Challenge
May 20, 2006AYALA CENTER
CEBU

MARKET! MARKET!

JAMMIN' with DISNEY
May 18 to 21, 2006Submerged: Fashion Show by Model Philippines
May 19, 2006Dinner Theater presents
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE!
A Repertory Philippines Production
May 9 & 16, 2006 / 6 pm / Greenbelt 2Repertory Philippines presents REPORTORY SUMMER CLASSES
Dinner Theater - May 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 / 6:30 pm
For inquiries, pls. call 867-0718Registration is now ongoing for Ayala Museum's
Summer Art Festival Workshops 2006
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc 20 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

Ayala MUSEUM

Ayala MUSEUM</div

Final 'AI' showdown

Southerner or LA lady?
US chooses between
Taylor and Kat today

By Kathryn Fatima Reyes

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3 songs each

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But the struggling musician from Birmingham, Alabama, has the advantage of experience, having performed in nightclubs since he was 16.

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But, even Cowell, who has repeatedly criticized the 29-year-old as "performing like he's drunk," has yielded and, last week, predicted that Taylor would be "it."

Katharine's fan base has obviously shown



SIMON Cowell and Paula Abdul. He's picked Hicks. She grieved on-cam when finalist No. 3, Elliott Yamin, was booted last week.

some muscle as well. She was in the bottom two and almost got the boot two weeks ago.

"I thought I was the one going home then (it was Chris Daughtry), and I actually felt shitty that I didn't," Kat said.

Gimmicks

Taylor said he might sneak in a harmonica solo or two in today's showdown at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood. He said he tried to do that in previous performances but wasn't allowed to. Whatever happens, he said, he's "gonna have fun and make America smile."

What about Kat's gimmick? "I don't have any," she said. "[Maybe] I will just wear a really hot dress and a nice pair of shoes."

As the top two contenders, Taylor and Kat are guaranteed separate record deals. Her album, Katharine said, would be along the lines of Joss Stone and Norah Jones. Taylor—who had written and recorded songs before "Idol," said he would like to re-produce and re-record those songs for commercial release.

"I want cutting-edge music in my album," Taylor insisted.

Easy does it

Asked how he hits the high notes, remembers the words and dances a storm, he simply answered, "Dancing is a lot easier than hitting the high notes!"

In an earlier interview he was asked, what he would do if he didn't win.

"I'll probably go back to being broke," he replied in jest.

More recently, he was asked if he would consider living in Hollywood henceforth.

Taylor said, "You know what, I'll probably live in the tour bus. That has always been my dream."

(Catch the performance finale on Starworld today (Manila time) 5 p.m., with replays at 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Grand finale will be aired here in real time tomorrow at 8 a.m., with replays at 5 p.m., 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.)

Mr. Kilmer, is that you?

INQUIRER RECEIVED VIA TEXT THIS LINE supposedly delivered by Pampanga Governor Mark Lapid in "Apoy sa Dibdib ng Samar," an "environmental" movie: "Oo, inaamin ka sila ay mga yakal, lawaan, apitong at narra at kami ay sagang lang. Pero maghanap kayo ng puno sa buong Pilipinas, sagang lang ang may puso."

Sure beats Joyce Kilmer.

Bursting Paolo's Bubbles

MODEL Bubbles Paraiso, host of the Studio 23 show "It's a Guy Thing," insists that her separation from boyfriend Paolo Contis was "amicable."

"When we see each other, we're civil," she said.

Paolo is now linked to another beauty, Isabel Oli.

There's always been another Paolo in Bubbles' life, however. Hunky model Paolo Paraiso is her brother.

When Bianca met Lino

TV DIRECTOR Lino Cayetano met current sweetheart Bianca Gonzalez on the set of the old ABS-CBN talent quest "Star Dance" last year. Bianca was one of the show's hosts, Lino, the director.

How's that for office romance?

When Bernard met Meryll

BERNARD Palanca was introduced to present love Meryll Soriano by Anne Curtis, erstwhile girlfriend of Bernard's cousin Paolo Araneta.

Meryll was Anne's co-star on the fantaserye "Kampanerang Kuba."

While Bernard and Meryll's relationship is going strong, Anne and Paolo's two-year romance went pfft five months ago.

'Manay Po'

SEXY actress Ara Mina said she does not find the kissing scene between her rumored boyfriend Polo Ravales and "Manay Po" co-star Luis Alandy scandalous.

Ara even said she wouldn't mind watching the film just to see this much-talked-about scene. Unfortunately, the smooch fest was disapproved by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board.

Barbie Almalbis

SINGER Barbie Almalbis reportedly cried when she heard of the rumor romantically linking her to fellow performer Aliza Seguerra. And for a reason, too. The pretty singer is engaged to Martin Honasan, son of former Sen. Gringo.

A&E

ENTERTAINMENT

small

METROPOLIS
ALABANG

Tel. No. 850 4285

- 1: The Da Vinci Code
- 2: Mission
- 3: Poseidon
- 4: Mission Impossible 3

Everyday Family Day at StarMalls!

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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Senate out to repeal provision on VAT cap /B8

BUSINESS

Editor Rauf O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

Text us your feedback: inquirer biz name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 203 (Smart) E-mail: pr_business@inquirer.com.ph

Website: www.inq7money.net

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 52.78 = \$

As of 5 p.m., May 23, 2006

Banco de Oro, EPCIBank merger fizzles out

By Doris C. Dumiao

THE MERGER PROPOSAL between Banco de Oro Universal Bank and Equitable PCI Bank has fizzled out, at least for now, amid the continuing squabble among EPCIBank shareholders.

EPCIBank chair Corazon dela Paz announced during the bank's stockholders' meeting yesterday that BDO's merger offer had lapsed.

"Right now, there's no merger proposal on the table," Dela Paz stressed.

In a separate interview, bank vice chair Teresita Sy, the chief representative of the SM group that owns the single biggest stake

in EPCIBank at 34 percent—said they were not pursuing any new proposal for now.

"We have other business interests aside from Equitable PCI Bank," Sy said.

She added that the SM group was not keen on buying the shares held by the minority stockholders, principally the state-owned Government Service In-

surance System and the Romualdez family.

These minority groups have opposed BDO's attempt to take over EPCIBank, claiming the offer was detrimental to the bank's shareholders.

GSIS president Winston Garcia was absent during the stockholders' meeting yesterday, but a number of lawyers engaged the board

in a lengthy debate over whether the Romualdez family should be allowed to vote on its shares.

In the end, the Romualdez family was barred from voting on its 7.13-percent stake in the bank.

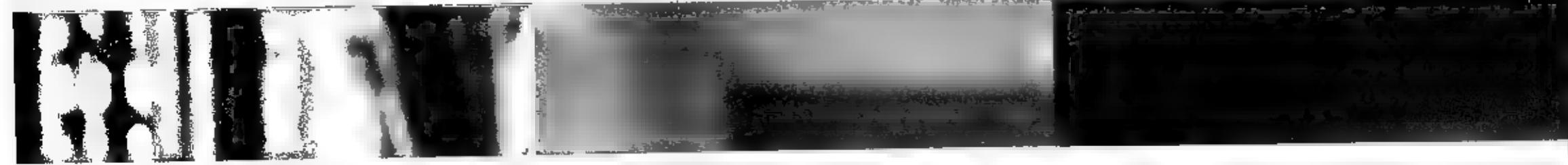
EPCIBank's corporate secretary Sabino Acut Jr did not allow the Romualdez's Trans-Middle East Equity Philippines Inc. from voting on its 51.8 million shares

by virtue of a restraining order from the Sandiganbayan.

Trans Middle East filed a separate petition with the Supreme Court, but in the absence of a temporary restraint order on the execution of the Sandiganbayan's order, the corporate secretary complied with the latter.

The counting of the votes for directors of EPCIBank was still ongoing as of press time.

BDO's controversial merger offer was to swap up to 1.6 of its BANCO/B3



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Stocks plummet on US rate fears

Bourse posts biggest single-day drop in 7 years

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SHARE PRICES CLOSED SHARPLY lower yesterday, losing 3.97 percent in the biggest single-day loss in nearly seven years as local investors caught up with Monday's global downturn, dealers said.

The market, open for only three hours a day, closed little

changed Monday at a time with the regional bourses were showing relatively modest losses.

However, in the afternoon the region saw a massive sell-off as investors fretted about the possibility of higher interest rates and slower economic growth and yesterday, Manila was catching up with that lead.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 93.62 points to 2,264.36 after moving between 2,257.68 and 2,357.98.

It was its biggest one-day loss of points since July 27, 1999, when it shed 113 points to close at 2,263.12. It was the index's biggest percentage loss in 10 months since July 4 last year when it shed 4.2 percent.

But some fund managers called the market's drop yesterday as an "over-reaction," saying the PSE index's contraction was due after weeks of substantial gains. Year-to-date, the market

was still up 8.03 percent.

Volume reached 5.35 billion shares worth P2.39 billion.

The broader all-shares index fell 50.21 points to 1,419.36.

Losers outnumbered gainers 10 to seven, while 30 stocks were unchanged.

"Major global markets want to slow down their economies to healthier levels. If they use interest rates as a policy tool to achieve this objective, then it's possible that funds flowing into emerging markets might reverse," said Mark Canizares of Citicorp.

STOCKS/B4

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Abadstar Dev. Bank Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.5	5.5	76,000
Banco de Oro Inc.	36.5	37	34.5	37	187,300
Bank of the Philippines	61.5	59.5	61.5	59.5	2,697,100
Chime Banking Corp.	890	890	885	885	2,000
Christals Seven Corp.	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	400
Eligible PCL Corp. Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.4	0.4	7,620,000
Eligible PCL Corp. Inc.	1	1	1	1	116,000
International Life Bank	41	41	40.5	40.5	53,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	38.5	39	37.5	38.5	503,500
Phil. Savings Bank Corp.	30	30.5	29	29	2,300
Plaza Corner Building Corp.	16.5	16.5	16	16.25	29,000
Security Bank Corp.	50	51	49	51	260,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	44.5	44.5	44.5	44.5	15,500

OTHER FINANCIAL INS.

Bankard Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.7	0.7	100,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	31.5	30.5	31.5	21,300
International Financial Corp.	1650	1800	1650	1780	520
PCL Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	1	1	250,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	200	200	200	200	2,500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2070	2070	2045	2049	360
UVA Corp.	1.12	1.14	1.02	1.08	7,106,000

INDUSTRIAL

First Gen Corp.	46.5	47	46.5	47	637,700
First Phil. Holdings Corp.	46	46.5	45.5	46.5	1,956,900
Manila Electric Co. A	13.75	13.75	13.5	13.5	11,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	20.5	20.5	20.25	20.25	1,033,500
Patron Corp.	7.3	7.3	7	7.1	4,409,000
Salcon Power Corp.	4.45	4.45	4.2	4.25	5,636,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	220,000
	0.99	0.99	0.9	0.9	960,000

FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO

Can Azucar De Yarac	6.8	6.8	6.5	6.5	1,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	3	3	3	3	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23	23.5	23	23.5	3,700
Johns Hopkins Corp.	35	35	35	35	393,000
RPM Corp.	0.73	0.73	0.72	0.72	200,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.75	2.8	2,275,000
San Miguel Corp. A	52.5	52.5	52.5	52.5	158,000
San Miguel Corp. B	79.5	81	78.5	81	594,600
Universal Robina Corp.	20.5	20.5	19.5	19.5	2,020,100
Vitanich Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.23	1,5,000

CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES

Southwest Asian Cement	0.32	0.33	0.31	0.33	370,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.28	1.24	3,938,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.75	4.75	4.45	4.65	646,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	30,000

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

Global Equities Inc.	0.115	0.115	0.095	0.1	14,410,000
Macdon Plastics Inc.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	4,000,000
Panasonic Mfg. Phil. Corp.	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	1,000

HOLDING FIRMS

Abacus Con Pesa & Hdg A	0.007	0.007	0.0065	0.0065	48,000,000
Abacus Con Pesa & Hdg B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	410	410	392.5	392.5	684,640
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.51	480,000
Abolitz Equity Ventures	5.6	5.6	5.4	5.5	5,253,000
Ati-Nal Holdings Inc.	0.028	0.028	0.026	0.026	2,200,000
A. S. Ronin Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.05	3.05	2,900,000
APC Group Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.225	500,000
Alcorn Gold Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	33,900,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.93	0.93	0.87	0.88	4,000,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	101,000
Bacnotan Cons. Indus. Inc.	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.9	7,000
Banipes Holdings Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.02	1.04	10,713,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4	4	3.75	3.75	1,413,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.25	3.25	3.05	3.05	675,000
Housa Di Investments Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	20,000
J. G. Sumil Holdings Inc.	7.1	7.1	6.7	6.7	1,241,000
Keppler Holdings	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	60,000
Multilock Dev. Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	50,000
Primo Driv. Phils. Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	710,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.51	0.51	100,000
Swepco Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.14	7,200,000
SM Investments Corp.	228	230	224	224	28,400
South China Resources Inc.	1.04	1.04	0.95	0.95	188,000
Seafarm Resources Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	10,000
Unifit Res. & Holdings Co.	0.095	0.095	0.0925	0.0925	1,800,000

Battle of court orders

EQUITABLE PCIBANK MOVED YESTERDAY to unseat vice chair Ferdinand Martin Romualdez as SM heiress Teresita Sy moved to pick up at least two more board seats in addition to her current four.

As of press time, votes were still being counted, with Romualdez unable to stop the bank from proceeding with the election despite obtaining a last-minute *en banc* Supreme Court order setting a hearing on June 6 on who shall be entitled to vote the sequestered Romualdez shares.

Romualdez obtained the court order after the Sandiganbayan, quoting an earlier court temporary restraining order, ruled that neither the Romualdez family nor the PCCG could vote the 7.8-percent Romualdez stake in Equitable PCIBank.

Romualdez ally GSIS president Winston Garcia was absent yesterday and was said to be in Europe attending a conference along with another GSIS director in the bank, Reynaldo Palmeiro. Another Romualdez ally, independent director Anthony Te, was also absent.

Amid legal questions and objections from lawyers from both camps, Sy's younger brother, nominee director Harley Sy, sat quietly observing, along with ex-Ramos executive secretary Peter Garrucho Jr., a nominee for independent director.

Even before the ballots were counted, Garrucho was already being tipped to head the bank's corporate governance committee.

Despite the setback, Romualdez gamely stayed during the balloting and counting, even managing to crack a few jokes with reporters.

Even the bank's top management officers, including main anti-Erap witness Clanssa Ocampo, were still waiting even at close of business hours for the results of the voting.

Big bang at Alabang

AYALA Land, which operates the waterworks system within Ayala Alabang Village, is planning to increase the minimum rate for household consumption by a whopping 80 percent.

The high users, defined as those who consume more than 100 cubic meters a month, are on the other hand being hit by a 41-percent rate rise. Ayala Land last increased water rates in the

COCKTAILS



Victor C. Agustin

upscale subdivision barely two years ago.

SEC's turn to be tricked

AFTER having successfully duped the Supreme Court and the Sandiganbayan as to the status of actual government control in the company, Philcomsat Holdings Corp. was again found to have foisted a disclosure trick, this time on the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Instead of a mere slap on the wrist, the SEC imposed a P274,000 fine on the Malacañang-based board of PHC.

The SEC had belatedly discovered that PHC had failed to disclose in its 2004 annual report that its then chair, Benito "Bomboy" Araneta, is a nephew of the current president, the ailing 90-year-old Manuel Nieto.

Araneta, the Erap holdover chair of Philcomsat Holdings Corp., relinquished the chairmanship to become an "independent" director after it was discovered that a total of P390 million of partially sequestered PHC funds were funneled to his first cousin, Antonio Araneta.

The acting PHC chair, the Malacañang-nominated Enrique Locsin who has allied himself with Araneta, is appealing the SEC fine.

Heard through the grapevine

SUCH huge crowds swamped the Mall of Asia on its opening day Sunday that by noontime, the 5,000-car indoor park of the country's biggest mall was already full and overflow cars had spilled doubled-parked in both lanes of the two-kilometer stretch of the bayside boulevard.

An exuberant SM official estimated that about 20,000 cars and assorted vehicles and close to a million customers visited the new mall on that day alone.

(Email: cocktails_pdi@pldtDSL.net or cocktails_pdi@yahoo.com)

Banco de Oro ...

shares for every EPCIBank share. As a second option, BDO also offered to base the swap ratio on the book values of both banks to be assessed by an independent accounting firm using International Accounting Standards.

At the time BDO submitted the offer last January, EPCIBank shares traded at about P63 each.

The SM group became the single biggest

From page B1

stockholder in EPCIBank with the accumulation of shares from the stock market and the buyout of the Go family last year.

But to consummate the SM group's proposed "merger of equals" that could create the country's second biggest lender with combined assets of about P500 billion, BDO needed consent from 67 percent of EPCIBank's shareholders.

By Daxim L. Lucas

TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORS have teamed up with police authorities in a bid to clamp down on the booming cellular phone trade which they believed was encouraging criminality.

In a statement issued yesterday, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) said it would start raiding unlicensed cell phone dealers, suppliers, retailers, service centers and those engaged in the selling of undocumented cell phones "particularly those coming from dubious sources."

The raids will be conducted by the NTC with the help of Philippine National Police personnel.

Earlier this month, the NTC and the PNP entered into a memorandum of agreement aimed at curbing cell phone-related criminal acts. The primary target of the deal is to address the illegal sale of lost or stolen cell phones as well as text scams.

The agreement was signed by NTC Commissioner Ronald Q. Solis and PNP Director General Arturo C. Lomibao.

"Business establishments engaged in the sale, purchase, retail and servicing are advised to secure the necessary permits and licenses from the NTC regional offices before they can

Police to help in raids

legally engage in the cell phone trade and servicing," the regulator said. "Failing to do so, these establishments shall be subject to stiff penalties and fines."

The NTC said that establishments caught operating without permits would be ordered to close shop and be levied a P5,000 fine.

Those engaged in the illegal purchase, sale and retail of units acquired from illegal sources will be fined P5,000 per unit or per violation, while those which purchase, sell or retail mobile phones without NTC approvals or acceptances will be fined the same amount per unit.

Firms found to be selling cell phones smuggled into the country will also be fined P5,000 per unit, as will those found to be servicing units without the required NTC permits.

NTC is giving emphasis on outlets

that repair cell phones because some of them are used to unlock stolen units before they are resold to unsuspecting buyers.

The regulator also served warning to pawnshops engaged in the cell phone trade, some of which are suspected of being used to "launder" fenced units.

"Pawnshops which are also being unwittingly used by cell phone snatchers and robbers in order to dispose of the stolen goods are to be considered as cell phone retailers if they engage in the sale of second-hand phones," the NTC said.

The NTC also said that it would periodically publish in newspapers the number and description of cell phones in custody and those turned over or recovered by the police to inform their owners.

Meanwhile, the NTC also announced a Metro-wide inspection of cables and wires along main thoroughfares this weekend in response to a growing number of complaints about sagging cables and lines.

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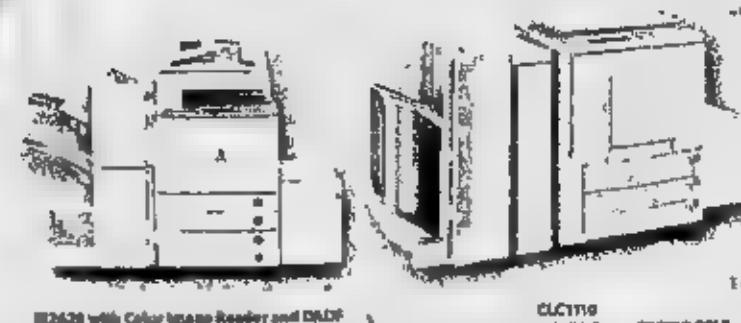
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Globe, ESPN forge content deal for 3G

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S SECOND largest mobile phone network operator yesterday sealed a deal with Mobile ESPN to provide sports content to its clients over their cellular phones.

Dubbed Bridge Mobile Alliance, the deal comes a few days after Globe's main rival, Smart Communications Inc., inked its own agreement with IMG sports network to provide sports content to clients over its third generation (3G) network.

Bridge Mobile Alliance brings together seven mobile phone companies in the Asia-Pacific region which will simultaneously offer Mobile ESPN's products, especially news and video content from the upcoming 2006 World Cup in Germany.

"The Bridge Mobile Alliance has proven in this initiative the strategic competitive advantage it delivers to its member operators," Globe service creation division head Mano R. Domingo said in a statement. "ESPN is a worldwide leader in sports broadcast and Globe Telecom is enthusiastic about its contribution to our comprehensive new set of services."

"Globe was the first in Asia Pacific to launch 3G with HSDPA," he added. "The ESPN content will highlight 3G's high speed, rich media and exciting features. The Filipino sports fan will be delighted to find this offering."

The service was launched by seven of Bridge Mobile Alliance's member operators, namely Airtel (India), CSL

(Hong Kong), Globe Telecom (Philippines), Maxus (Malaysia), SingTel (Singapore), Taiwan Mobile (Taiwan) and Telkomsel (Indonesia).

The company statement said that the Mobile ESPN sports content service was the first of a regional mobile content suite of services to be offered by the alliance, as part of its regional mobile service strategy.

Mobile ESPN is the mobile sports content service provided by ESPN Star Sports, Asia's No. 1 sports broadcaster and content provider.

ESPN Star Sports broadcasts the world's premier live sports and leading regional sports events to over 139 million households on ESPN and over 63 million households on Star Sports.

The company said the Mobile ESPN service would allow sports fans to follow their favorite sports teams and major sports events more closely than ever before, "all within the single touch of their mobile phone."

"With easily accessible WAP portal and SMS alert services, subscribers are able to enjoy an exciting lineup of their favorite sports content through video clips, streaming and downloads, 'live' news coverage and in-depth match analysis, breaking news and top stories anytime and anywhere through their mobile phones," the company explained.

"Football fans will be delighted to know that a dedicated news section on the World Cup 2006 will be available from May 23 to July 9, 2006."

Employers to create more jobs

Business groups resolve to match positions with skilled workers

By Ronnel W. Domingo

CREATING MORE JOBS "WITH stable and decent employment relations" is the key to staying in business, employers said yesterday during the closing of their two-day 27th National Conference held at the Manila Hotel.

Organized by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, groups at the gathering resolved to improve the match between demand for jobs and the supply of skilled workers, work with the government and other sectors on creating jobs in flexible and competitive labor markets, and tap countries that import Filipino workers to help sustain the local labor pool.

Also, the employers agreed to sustain the benefits that companies provide society by promoting

corporate social responsibility and compliance with labor and social standards.

Ecop said employers needed to take such steps amid "complicated changes taking place in the (local) economy due to continuing adjustments of business and industry to rapid changes and intensifying pressure" in the global economy.

The group looked at the following factors affecting their firms' survival, competitiveness and growth: liberalized domestic and foreign markets, technological innovations; global sourcing of goods and services and movements of people, including migration of professional skills and talents in response to global demand.

"There are tremendous opportunities for employers to

have a stronger voice and be represented in negotiations with various bilateral and multilateral trade partners to prepare the workforce for drastic changes, including economic integration, pandemics and other disasters," Ecop said.

In particular, the employers resolved to take up the following efforts among others:

- Gain competitive advantage by ensuring adequate planning and development of the workforce with the essential skills needed in enterprises.

- Break the glass ceiling for women by ensuring equal employment opportunities, setting targets for women achievers to occupy top positions and espousing a total gender equality policy.

- Prepare effective social safety nets targeted for vulnerable

workers such as the youth, women, differently abled persons, seniors, home workers, and migrants.

- Identify critical skills that would be in short supply and develop a human resource development plan to provide the pipeline for fresh talents and skills.

- Campaign for limiting the number of "special non-working days" to avoid disruption of production or operation schedules.

- Provide funds, create, test and fine-tune a "labor market signal system" that would measure which skills would be in demand, in shortage or in oversupply.

The employers likewise resolved to tap countries that host Filipino overseas workers in helping replenish domestic investments in education and training.

Alaska to expand powdered milk line

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MILK MARKET LEADER ALASKA MILK CORP. is spending \$5 million to expand its powdered milk line as it banks on further increasing its market share over the next few years.

The expansion will increase its capacity to produce powdered milk by another 2 tons an hour from 1.5 tons an hour at its spray drying facility in San Pedro, Laguna.

The new facility will be operational by the first quarter of next year.

Spray drying refers to a process that converts treated skim milk into powdered milk.

This year, however, will be tough for the milk products producer, with net earnings expected to contract 15 percent from P300.9 million in 2005 due to its decision to hold off price increases.

AMC president Wilfred Steven Uytengsu Jr. said following yesterday's stockholders' meeting that AMC would keep prices steady despite the higher cost of raw materials, which would impact on its net income.

The prices of tins, plates, a major packaging material for AMC's milk products, are expected to breach the \$1,000 a ton level this year up 1 percent from about \$900 a ton.

A more positive trend is the projected improvement in skim milk prices, which were expected to decline to \$2,000 a metric ton by the fourth quarter this year from the current \$2,150 a metric ton, Uytengsu said.

The market is contracting as an industry but we have been growing our market share. We believe in the long term that the market will not continue to contract, there is real population growth of about 2.4 percent so

that is a million more customers into the market place," Uytengsu said. "We believe that ultimately, the market will rebound as we have seen in the fourth quarter last year."

Alaska is the dominant player in the liquid milk category with a 42-percent market share in evaporated milk and a 49-percent market in condensed milk. It is the second largest brand in the powdered milk category with a 21-percent market share.

In the first quarter, net income for AMC contracted 20 percent to P74 million from P93 million in the same period last year as consumer demand continued to be affected by the increase in taxes and prices of goods and services.

Operating costs also increased due to hikes in the prices of local and imported raw and packaging materials, particularly sugar, skim milk powder and tins, plates.

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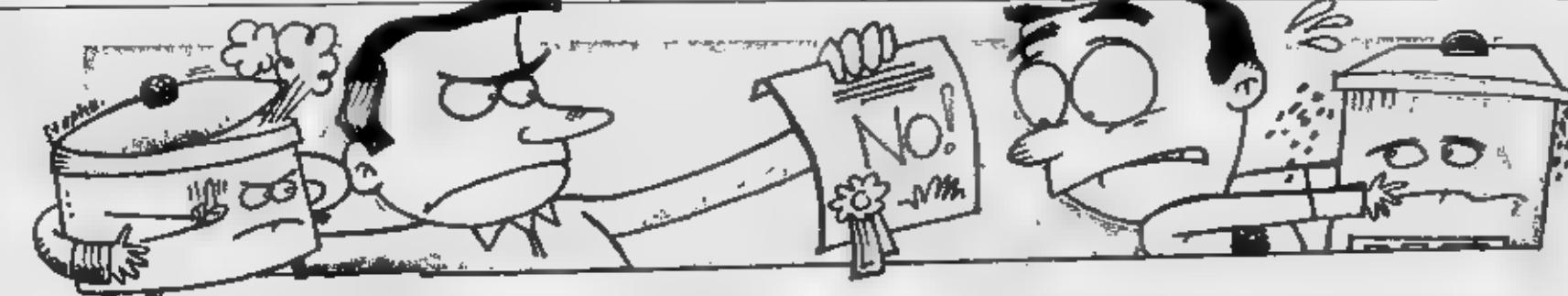
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BUSINESS

Senate out to repeal provision on VAT cap

DOF yields to business groups, says it won't oppose move to rationalize tax system



Standard firms win case, retain trademark

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY Office yesterday said it had turned down a rice dispenser manufacturer's petition to be allowed to use the brand name "Standard" following opposition from an appliance company that has been using it for years.

Adrian S. Cristobal Jr., IP

Philippines Director General, said the agency decided in favor of Standard Appliances Corp. and its sister firm Standard Electric Manufacturing Corp., which opposed the trademark application filed by businessman Johnny Konwat.

Cristobal said that the sister firms argued that allowing Konwat to use "Standard" would limit their rights and

their opportunities to use their registered trademark for new products.

In its filing, Standard Appliance said that if Konwat was allowed to use the trademark, this "would deceive the public into believing that his product is owned by (us), or whose manufacture (we have) allowed."

According to the firm, the Standard firms have been us-

ing trademark since June of 1966 for products like electric fans, bread toasters, rice cookers, washing machines, flat irons, hair dryers, water heaters, television sets, radios, weighing scales, clocks, air pots, gas stoves, thermo bottles and electric pots.

Cristobal said that after a review of exhibits from the applicant and the oppositor, IP

Philippines found that both trademarks contained the same word, Standard, "the spelling, meaning and pronunciation of which is exactly the same."

Further, IP Philippines hearing officer Paule Sapak, who handled the case, found that the "opposer's mark and that of the respondent-applicant is identical in all aspects and is therefore confusingly similar."

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUSINESS SECTOR HAS GAINED AN ally in the Senate after the chamber's ways and means committee vowed to repeal the hotly contested 70-percent cap on input VAT credits.

Sen. Ralph Recto, committee chair, said the lifting of the VAT cap would be one of the provisions in a proposed bill that would seek to rationalize the income tax system.

Various business groups, including the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, have been protesting the cap on input VAT credits. The groups said that the measure is unjust because it prevents corporate taxpayers from claiming the credits that are due them. They also said the VAT cap was burdensome, especially for those whose profit margins are less than 30 percent.

The VAT cap is one of the provisions of the Reformed Value-Added Tax Law. The 70-percent cap meant that the amount of input VAT credits that a company may claim for a given tax period should not exceed 70 percent of its output VAT. Any amount in excess of 70 percent can be claimed in the next tax period.

Input VAT is the amount of tax shouldered by a company every time it purchases goods or services whose prices already include the value-added tax. Output VAT is the tax on one's gross sales which is currently set at 12 percent.

Under the VAT system, firms are allowed to deduct the input VAT from its output VAT to determine its actual tax liability. Authorities, however, earlier thought of putting a cap on the amount of input VAT credits following reports of abuse of the crediting system.

The Department of Finance, which earlier claimed that the imposition of a 70-percent VAT cap would generate P6.9 billion in additional revenues for the government a year, admitted that setting a cap on VAT credits has disrupted the input-output crediting nature of the VAT system.

According to a finance official, the DOF will no longer oppose the move to repeal the VAT cap.

The official said the DOF realized that putting a cap on VAT credits was not a prudent revenue-enhancement measure.

To address abuses, the official said, the Bureau of Internal Revenue should tighten its monitoring system rather than penalize businesses with legitimate claims.

Exports of bananas seen increasing by 15% this year

By Christine A. Gaylican

PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION IS EXPECTED to increase Philippine exports of fresh bananas this year by up to 15 percent, government and industry officials said.

An increase in demand from Japan and non-traditional markets including the Middle East of other banana varieties, aside from the best-selling Cavendish bananas, may translate to higher dollar earnings for banana exporters in 2006, Department of Agriculture Undersecretary Segfredo Serrano said.

Serrano said that the local varieties, including sari-sari and lakatan, are now acceptable to the Japanese market, which has cornered 60 percent of local exports of Cavendish bananas.

Last year, the country shipped a total of 891,612 tons of the Cavendish variety to Japan.

According to Francisco Lorenzo, Lapanday Foods Corp. senior vice president and general manager, product diversification could sustain the country's gains as orders from Japan for the other varieties are lining up.

He said that Philippine banana exporters cornered a larger market share of the \$70-million Japanese market last year.

And there is still more room for growth this year, Lorenzo added.

He said a 15-percent growth in production is seen this year after some farmers in the province of Budiong shifted to planting bananas due to higher returns compared with sugar.

Philippine banana exports rose by 11 percent in 2005 to about 1.1 million metric tons compared with the 1.71 million metric tons delivered during the same period in 2004, according to the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA).

IMF urges RP banks to go easy on foreign currency bonds

By Doris C. Dumao

THE LARGE EXPOSURE OF LOCAL BANKS to the Republic of the Philippines' foreign currency bonds, or ROPs, has drawn the concern of the International Monetary Fund, which is now urging the banks to diversify to reduce their vulnerability and help spur investment growth in the country.

Domestic banks are estimated to hold over 80 percent of locally held external bonds, rising from about 70 percent in 1999, according to a paper released by the IMF staff ahead of the Philippine review this June.

"The forces behind increased bank holdings of ROPs deserve some scrutiny," the paper said. "There is also a need for vigilance from the authorities to ensure that an investment recovery is not hampered by a slowness on the part of banks to move away from these bonds."

The increasing domestic ownership of foreign currency bonds issued by the government had somehow reduced the volatility of ROPs over the years, the study noted. But the same exposure could cause potential balance sheet vulnerabilities to the investing banks and financial institutions.

"Given the presence of home bias, a pattern of repeated adverse shocks is likely to create a sustained demand for ROPs among asset

managers," the study said.

Also, the IMF said banks and pension funds must "diversify their holdings away from government paper in order to reduce potential balance sheet vulnerabilities."

The study warned that trading dynamics may change in the period ahead and that any factor causing the behavior of banks or depositors to change—such as a strong investment-led domestic recovery, a preference shift by domestic depositors away from dollars, or a change in the assessment of default risk by financial institutions—could be a catalyst for change.

Citing data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the IMF said domestic investors purchased over \$3 billion of externally floated Philippine debt, or close to a fifth of the entire stock of ROPs, from external investors in the secondary market alone.

As of June 2005, the IMF study noted there were some \$28 billion of outstanding Philippine foreign bonds, of which \$19 billion was owed by the national government.

Bond holders were estimated to hold over 30 percent of the external debt and close to 40 percent of the public sector's external debt. Of the \$28 billion in bonds, some \$10 billion was held by domestic residents, largely consisting of local banks (estimated at 81 percent) and insurance companies and pension funds (14 percent).

DA seeks P600-M grant from Japan to support rice production program

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERY COUNCIL (NAFC), an attached agency of the Department of Agriculture, is seeking a P600-million grant from the Japanese Government to support the country's rice production program.

DA officials said that the grant they sought would come from the Japanese government's Increase in Food Production Program—also known as KR2—for developing countries.

Part of it may be a commodity grant in the form of fertilizers, NAFC executive director Bernie Fondevilla said.

Fondevilla earlier said that the Philippine government has tapped some P200 million from the KR2 program to promote the use of composting to create organic fertilizers in local farm areas.

For two years, the country was struck off the list of beneficiaries and did not receive agricultural commodities or farm-related im-

ports such as fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and agricultural machinery from Japan.

Philippine Agriculture attaché Joseph Sison explained that the Japanese were quite disappointed with the Philippine government's decision to use the proceeds of the KR2 as budgetary support, and not for agriculture projects.

He said the Philippine Agricultural office in Japan has appealed its case to the Japanese Parliament.

"We have reemphasized to them that such a move will actually aggravate hunger in our country as our rice farmers will now have no access to cheap sources of fertilizers," Sison said.

He added that the Philippine government would also like to assure the Japanese that the KR2 proceeds would be used strictly for agriculture modernization and other related projects.

Christine A. Gaylican

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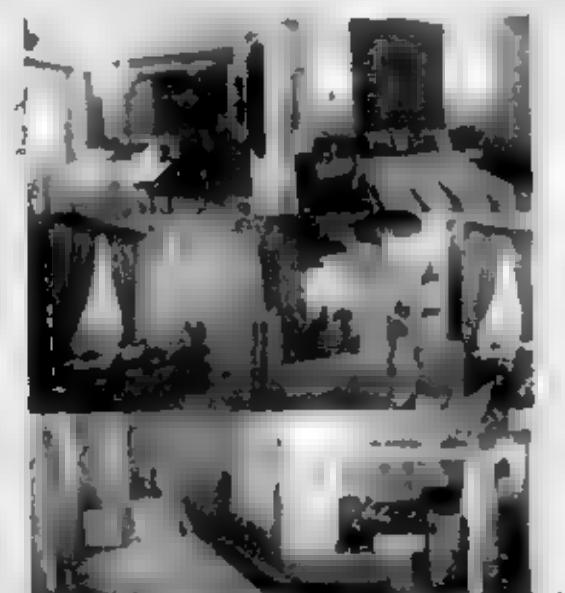
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Taking NLEX? Get enough sleep first

Those drivers who practice road safety are the ones who can bring in more profit for the company because they will have longer staying power. They actually save companies millions of pesos from damaged properties and hospital expenses

By Tessa R. Salazar

YOU MAY BE THE WORLD'S most skillful driver, but if you get behind the wheel drowsy, then you're worse than the worst of them.

And what's worse than drowsy driving? Doing it on one of the country's "speediest" expressways—at the North Luzon Expressway, where driving has become considerably "smoother" and technically easier that coasting along at 80 to 100 kilometer per hour (kph) for extended periods can literally lull you to sleep. The NLE publication recently revealed that drowsy driving ("driving under the influence of sleep"), driving fatigued or DUI (driving under the influence of alcohol and other substances) is the fourth leading cause of road accidents at the NLE.

Benjie A. Suzara, NLE Express editor, revealed to the INQUIRER that there were 57 reported cases of accidents caused by driver fatigue or sleepiness during February to December 2005. This figure came in fourth after reckless driving (600 cases), tire failure (246 cases) and brake failure (120 cases) as the top three causes of accidents at the NLE.

Even at the more "technically challenging" South Luzon Expressway, drowsy driving has forced authorities to sit up and pay attention. On the elevated Skyway ramp of the SLE, there were 48 reported accidents caused by fatigue or sleepiness in 2005. This was revealed by Daisy Jacobo, chief of the Land Transportation Office's traffic safety division.

Top 3 causes of accidents

At the national level, the top three causes of accidents in 2005 as indicated in the Philippine National Police's Traffic Management Group were driver error (3,301 cases in 2005 versus 4,319 in 2004); overspeeding (1,624 in 2005 versus 1,505 in 2004), and mechanical defects (1,434 in 2005 versus 2,087 in 2004).

In total, the TMG reported 11,425 cases in 2005, a 19.55 percent decrease from the 14,202 cases in 2004.

Though drowsy driving was not expressly indicated as one of the causes in the accident report, Jacobo said that fatigue or sleepiness may have been included in the national data under driver error.

Lack of sleep

The NLE data revealed that majority of public utility vehicle drivers weren't able to get enough hours of sleep (8.5 hours according to scientific studies) for various reasons.

Some drivers indicated trip quotas forced them to drive more than they should. Others, though, insisted that even if they lacked sleep, they could still drive.

"If our motivation is profit, it would be to our advantage if we study these (accident) figures so that it can guide us in our work. In the long run, those drivers who practice road safety are the ones who can bring in more profit for the company because they will have longer staying power," Jacobo said.

And these drivers who practice road safety actually save companies millions of pesos from damaged properties and hospital expenses, she added.

NLE patrols say they are on the constant lookout for sleepy drivers. If they spot one (tell-tale indicators are the vehicle veering from its lane and/or running unusually slow) they would pull the driver over to a safe spot where the driver could catch some sleep.

Jacobo urges drivers to also be mindful of the medicines they are taking before getting behind the wheel. "Cold tablets or cough syrups can have a soporific effect. If you are taking these, have somebody drive for you."



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AVEO Special Ed. 1.6 M/T	635,000	50,000	50,192	34,77	26,052	20,266	18,303	7,610
AVEO Special Ed. 1.6 A/T	675,000	50,000	53,002	36,361	28,000	20,005	18,075	10,007
Optra 1.6 A/T	720,000	69,003	55,959	38,269	29,541	24,005	18,000	8,609
Optra 1.6 A/T	738,500	69,000	57,781	39,594	30,704	22,850	18,000	8,644
Goring 6.5 A/T	765,000	85,000	67,781	42,370	37,633	23,460	18,716	9,183
Goring 6.5 M/T	795,000	99,000	67,781	42,461	38,453	28,792	18,327	9,627
Optra Special Ed. 1.6 A/T	808,000	99,000	63,125	43,704	33,842	27,873	18,743	9,653
Optra Wagon 1.6 A/T	853,000	99,000	67,249	44,000	33,671	26,349	20,338	10,273



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Road deaths

CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS?

More than 800 people die daily of road traffic accidents in the Western Pacific region. That is not to include the injured, or the maimed for life.

The Western Pacific region covers 48 countries and territories including Australia, the Pacific Island countries, Japan, Korea, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

This bizarre finding was bared only a few days ago by the World Health Organization (WHO) in a meeting with national experts in Manila to discuss future directions for injury and accident prevention programs.

You may not also believe it but the safest mode of travel is by air.

Traveling by land is the most dangerous as road accidents occur almost every minute worldwide.

Imagine the catastrophic proportions if air accidents happen every minute worldwide?

Or mishaps happening at sea worldwide every minute?

The sinking of the Titanic will merely become a stat in everyday living.

Defensive driving has always been my defense against road accidents. Thank God, it's been working all these years.

If we say defensive driving, you drive carefully in the sense that:

- You don't overtake recklessly as to take risks when passing another vehicle.

- You don't drive fast in a crowded road.

- You use your brake and not your horn all of the time (OK, if really necessary, honk but only to warn and not irritate).

- You keep your cool if a jeepney/bus/taxi driver—or even a driver of a private vehicle for that matter—cuts your path.

- You consider all drivers around you idiots.

Well, wait a minute, what about cops, or MMDA men, who pin you down with a traffic violation but in reality are only out to fleece you?

Keep your cool.

First, ask the officer what your violation is. Of course, he will ask you to show your

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

driver's license.

You tell him right off, yes, you will show him your license but you will not hand it to him.

Showing your license and surrendering it to him are two different things.

As far as I know, the law does not require you to surrender your license. It says you show proof that you are driving with a license that is valid—meaning it is not an expired license.

In short, be smart. Never allow yourself to be outsmarted by an apprehending traffic enforcer. For all you know, you are a lot wiser than him.

If you assert your right, he'll think twice.

Accidents happen and, most of the time, they happen within three seconds.

It can really be avoided—minimize it, really—if you are alert, aware of the rules on the road, and cautious of all the drivers around you.

I've said this before but I'll say it again. My ABC in driving means A as in Avoid, B as in Brake and C as in Cool.

"Avoid" vehicles as much as possible by "Braking" and being "Cool" at all times.

Ours is a country with driving habits that isn't the envy of many countries around the world.

But I dare you to be different. Adopt my ABC of driving and contribute to WHO's campaign for road safety in the Pacific region.

Always, a good habit is worth keeping.

QUOTE ME. In a capsule I describe former Toyota hot shot Ariel de Jesus, the Che Guevara of our motoring industry, this way: When something's become too good to be true, it's time to quit.

Comments to menu@pldtDSL.net



Could, would, should

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma



WE LIVE IN A SMALL BUT SURVIVING automotive market, nowhere near where we'd like to be but far from what our imaginations will label as catastrophic. Some of us should still remember the days when new vehicle releases were so rare that the average buyer never really had a choice of what to put in his or her home garage. These days, we are spoiled with the choices available in the showroom floors but that does not mean all we'll ever need is already available here and now.

Ford seems like they have their bases covered but the Blue Oval lineup is sorely missing a small, fun and economical runabout. Not that they'd admit it though.

Market segment

This is a market segment filled, very capably in other markets, by the exciting Ford Fiesta model. Almost a micromachine version of the current Focus, this super-mini can be had with anything from a 1250 cc, four-pot gas burner, a 1.4-liter turbo diesel and the insane 148-bhp, 2.0-liter engine of the scorching hot, sub-8 second to 100-km/h, ST version.

Costs and quality of fuel may be the issue why another manufacturer cannot expand further an already solid lineup. BMW admittedly makes some of the best driving platforms available in the Philippines today. Divisive Chris Bangle styling and premium pricing aside, it would be very hard to find fault with the current crop of Bimmers, especially if the road twists and turns and you find yourself fortunate to have some iteration of the in-line six engines that the Munich-based manufacturer purveys.

The real hidden talent in the BMW retail stable is the availability, in other markets, of their hard-hitting sporting diesel engines. These razor sharp common-rail, direct injection, variable nozzle turbo diesels raise the bar for other manufacturers wishing to go the way of the torque-laden nature of this second line fuel.

Petite performer

The petite performer that is the 1 Series is made even more able by the availability of a 2.0-liter turbo-diesel model. This version of BMW's rear-wheel-drive hatchback delivers sub-8 second time slaps to 100 kilometer per hour (kph) with a 163 bhp, 232 ft lb of torque via a six-speed manual gear change. This engine also graces the 3 Series and delivers about the same performance, one of practicality with punch—under 8 seconds to 100 kph with an estimated 25 percent fuel efficiency over the gasoline 320i.

Then there is the 530d, already with impressive torque numbers, and its bigger brother, the diesel twin-turbo 535d. Both sport 3.0-liter common rail engines, with the twin-turbo version doing the print to 100 kph in only six and a half seconds, due in large part to a claimed factory performance of 272 bhp and 413 ft lb of pull. While power is only relatively substantial, the torque figures of the

535d are higher than some 5.0-liter V10 super car engines in the market.

Argument

The argument for diesel also spills over into the case of Toyota. While already commonplace in the IMV trio of the Innova, Fortuner and the Hilux, the same D-4D technology is found across pretty much of the product line in other markets. Just how far does this common rail, direct injection phenomena penetrate into the Toyota lineup. Hmmm, let's see.

The Aygo city car venture with Citroen and Peugeot has a diesel, albeit not a D-4D unit but one from the French manufacturers. The new Yaris/Vitz/Echo model comes with a 1.4-liter D-4D unit. The Corolla can be had with three such engines, 1.4-liter, 2.0-liter and 2.2-liter. Two-liter D-4D units can be had with the RAV4 and the Previa MPV. While the Philippine market is still not probably keen on seeing diesels in anything other than a van or jeep, the trickle down of this phenomenon to compact and sedans may take a little longer.

There are cars out in the world market that seem like perfect show-ins for any of the many motoring needs of the Filipino. Some will say that there's no point in this exercise; that the planners of the automotive industry have weeded out the superfluous, leaving us the best lineups that their respective manufacturers can offer. All knowing and expert as these people probably are, there are a few cars that would make quite a few motoring lives more interesting—an end in itself worth pursuing.

MOTORSCOPE

Toyota medical mission

TOYOTA MOTOR PHILIPPINES FOUNDATION RECENTLY HELD ITS MEDICAL and dental outreach program dubbed "Toyota, Gabay Sa Kalusugan" held recently at the San Agustin Elementary School in Barangay Moonwalk, Parañaque City.

Close to 2,000 patients were treated during the whole-day medical activity that included services such as general medicine, pediatrics, dental, dermatology, OB-gyne and surgery.

To date, Toyota has treated over 78,000 patients through its 36 medical and dental outreach programs. These regular medical missions are an integral part of Toyota's four-pronged social development program on environmental preservation, education, health and community services.

Official road safety advocate

FEDEX EXPRESS (FEDEX), A SUBSIDIARY OF FEDEX CORP. AND THE world's largest express transportation company is the official road safety advocate at the 2nd Philippine Car of the Year Awards.

The awards, held by the Car Awards Group Inc. rates motor vehicles that were introduced or were available in the local market from Oct. 1, 2004 to Dec. 31, 2005. The ratings are based on safety, comfort, convenience, aesthetic considerations and "seat-of-the-pants" feel during regular driving modes.

"FedEx believes that the Car of the Year Awards (Coty) is an important way to ensure that the vehicles on the roads today are meeting quality standards of safety and performance," said Clifton Chua, FedEx managing director for the Philippines, Thailand and Indochina.

Goodyear reaffirms excellence

HIGH PERFORMANCE TIRES, A SPECIALTY TUNED EURO CAR, GLAMOROUS models and a whole line of exciting activities were the order of the day as Goodyear headlined this year's Trans Sport Show, the biggest and longest-running after-market auto show in the Philippines.

For its creative, out-of-the-box design, and kaleidoscope of activities offered, the Goodyear Pit Stop was named best booth of the five-day affair. Event organizers commended the leading tire company for mounting a booth comparable to those seen in international auto shows.

At the center of the event is an interactive presentation of the company's products, including the award-winning Goodyear Eagle F1 tires.

Featured in the company booth was a late model BMW 1-Series Sports Hatch, dressed up with special Ereyton body kits to enhance the vehicle's aerodynamics and overall aesthetic value. The car also sported a creative decal execution of Goodyear Eagle F1's V-TRED pattern, a unique footprint of the award-winning tire. To complete the look, designers mounted massive 19-inch Goodyear Eagle F1 tires, which were the biggest-sized tires installed in any compact car seen at the Trans Sport Show.

As an added treat, Goodyear also gave consumers an opportunity to own Eagle F1, Fortara and Wrangler tires by offering special discounts during the entire duration of the Trans Sport Show.

Sorento CRDi: Kia's top of the line SUV

THE NEW KIA SORENTO CRDI DIESEL, THE only 4x4 awarded the maximum "5 Star" rating in the UK's annual JD Power and Associates' customer satisfaction index survey, is out to assert its presence in the Philippines' mid-size sport utility vehicle (SUV) market.

Produced by the Korean carmaker made famous by its compact cars Picanto and Rio that were runaway bestsellers in Europe and the Americas in 2004, the Sorento offers a wise option for buyers who prefer a relatively bigger vehicle that doesn't have the menacing presence of massive SUVs.

Best-looking SUV

Felix J. Mabilog Jr., chief operating officer of Columbian Aurocar Corp., manufacturer and distributor of Kia in the Philippines de-

scribes the Sorento as "pound for pound, the best-looking SUV in the market today." He said the Sorento approaches its performance tasks with power that overwhelms the roughest terrain, but glides over paved roads in serene smoothness. It reflects the relentless drive of Kia to achieve its goal of global prominence through advanced engineering and design.

At the heart of the 4,567 millimeter long, 1,863 mm wide and 1,740 mm height sleek exterior is a Common Rail Direct Injection (CRDI) engine with turbo charger intercooler. It has an accelerating power off the starting block and solid overtaking power provided by an engine that pumps out a maximum power of 140ps at 3,800 rpm and a hefty 32.0 kg-rpm torque at 2,000 rpm. A double wishbone,

coil spring with strut damper in front, along with a five-ring, coil spring damper on the rear, keep the bounce smooth and easy.

"With this engine configuration, any road condition for the Sorento is a stroll in the park," Mabilog says proudly. "Besides, in Kia, vehicles customers get excellent value for their money, metal for metal. They get to enjoy all these qualities and conveniences without feeling a dent in their pockets," he adds.

Sleek interior

Matching the Sorento's power and performance is a sleek interior that compares with any SUV in the market today. The gauges and other controls are easy to locate and clearly marked. It has comfortable, supportive front seats with eight-way power drive seat. It has ample head and legroom for above-average size adults. Step-in height is reasonable for an SUV while wide doors reveal roomy, comfortable seating for rear passengers.

Features like leather seats, electrically heated rear window, power side mirrors and windows, CD audio system with six speakers, front-row cupholders and tilt adjustable steering wheel are standard.

Kia is acknowledged as one of the most improved brands in reliability studies conducted very recently. It offers world-class quality and value and its cars are winning more and more awards for quality and safety.

The Sorento's powerfully built 225/75 R16 steel-belted tires on alloy wheels add to the brawny look which comes in clear white, silver, radiant red and grey black.



SORENTO

The SUV with the driving character of a mid-size sedan

WITH ITS SEGMENT-LEADING STANDARD safety technologies, all-new unibody SW platform, bold new styling, a choice of fuel-efficient V6 powertrains and Hyundai's first SUV third-row seat, the Santa Fe becomes a "must-drive" for consumers shopping in the crossover segment.

As the first production vehicle designed at Hyundai's design center in Irvine, California, the Santa Fe is targeted to meet consumers' demand for safety, style, sophistication and performance. Before designing it, however, Hyundai engineers benchmarked the world's leading unibody SUVs, including the Lexus RX, Acura MDX and Volvo XC90. The result is a more exciting and upscale Santa Fe that combines the best attributes of SUVs with the driving character of a mid-size sedan.

Hyundai packed the all-new Santa Fe with the industry's most effective safety technologies, including Electronic Stability Control (ESC), anti-whiplash active head restraints and airbags. Santa Fe is expected to earn the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) top five-star crash test rating.

The standard 2.7-liter V6 is upgraded

one of the industry's most effective life-saving technologies. ESC compares the driver's intended course with the vehicle's actual response. ESC then brakes individual front or rear wheels and/or reduces engine power as needed in certain driving circumstances to help correct understeer or oversteer. NHTSA studies show SUVs equipped with ESC experience 63 percent fewer fatalities in single-vehicle crashes.

Santa Fe joins Tucson, Sonata, Azera and Entourage as vehicles in Hyundai's growing lineup with standard Electronic Stability Control—a commitment to this sophisticated and effective automotive safety technology that is unmatched by any other nonluxury automotive brand.

Front and rear disc brakes are standard and are coupled with a four-channel Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) that includes Electronic Brake force Distribution (EBD) to optimize brake performance even with differing vehicle loading.

All seating positions feature three-point seatbelts and adjustable head restraints. Front seat active head restraints help prevent whiplash by automatically reducing the space between a front occupant's head and the head restraint during a rear collision. Santa Fe also features a standard tire pressure monitoring system.

Bold design

With dramatic new styling that is assertive, refined and confident, the all-new Santa Fe exterior showcases the evolving face of the Hyundai brand.

At 184.1 inches long, the new Santa Fe is about seven inches longer than its predecessor, one inch wider and almost two inches taller. Its 2.9-inch wider track—wider than Toyota Highlander or Ford Explorer—provides a strong stance, improved handling and increased interior room.

The 2007 Santa Fe shares an assertive front grille, confident sculptured lines and finely detailed headlamps with Hyundai's HCD9 Talus concept, which was also introduced at the 2006 Naias.

For a more aggressive appearance, Santa Fe SE and Limited models come with 18-inch alloy wheels.

Sleeker styling makes 2007 Santa Fe more aerodynamic, improving its drag coefficient.

A roof rack with integrated cross rails helps define its clean side profile, while adding functionality.

Efficient interior

The all-new 2007 Santa Fe is one of the most package-efficient crossover SUVs on the market. Hyundai accomplished this by developing an all-new platform that avoids the compromises inherent in typical mid-size car/SUV platform sharing.

Santa Fe is Hyundai's first SUV with optional seven-passenger seating. Since 40 percent of all SUV customers want a third-row seat, this will significantly broaden Santa Fe's appeal. The third-row seat is split 50/50 and can be folded flat like the 60/40-split second-row seat. Total cargo volume is a cavernous 79.4 cubic feet, with plenty of storage for items of different sizes.

Available dual-zone climate controls for driver and front seat passenger bring a touch of luxury to the Santa Fe. Second- and third-row passengers will enjoy a new level of comfort, thanks to a rear fan switch, 8-pillar mounted adjustable vents and dual rear heating ducts.

The all-new Hyundai Santa Fe is now available in the Philippines through Hyundai Asia Resources Inc. (Hari) dealerships nationwide.

Who's afraid of biofuels?

DON'T BLAME US CONSUMERS IF WE ARE. Ever since a bill mandating the use of ethanol-blended gasoline was approved by the House of Representatives last November, we have been subjected to a confusing information barrage from oil companies, car manufacturers, non-government organizations and the Department of Energy (DoE) about the benefits and risks of using fossil fuel blended with sugar-derived ethanol or coconut methyl ester (CME).

Granted that the mandatory use of biofuels sourced from indigenous crops will save the country hundreds of millions in foreign exchange annually, clean up the air, increase the mileage of motor vehicles, lift the earnings of poor sugar and coconut farmers and speed up the country's drive toward energy independence... but what about the consumer? Who will be held responsible if something goes wrong in your car because of the long-term use of biofuels?

Null and void

Certainly not the car manufacturer or car dealer. As early as two years ago, the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) expressed concern about how ethanol-blended gasoline can affect fuel system components due to ethanol's affinity to water. Campi warned that the warranty of a motor vehicle will become null and void if any problem is traced to the use of fuel or an additive not approved by the car manufacturer. The manufacturer should not be held liable for what the consumer has put in the vehicle, Campi says.

ON THE ROAD



**Aida
Sevilla-
Mendoza**

Not liable

Like Campi, the big oil companies don't want to be blamed should a car malfunction due to the use of biofuel. Among the oil majors, Caltex has been the most vocal against the Biofuels Act. Caltex has emphasized that oil companies or retailers should not be held liable for any damage or any other form of loss to the vehicle or its parts on account of their compliance with the biofuels mandate.

Last December, Caltex (sometimes called Chevron) told Congress in a position paper that it could not support legislation mandating the sale and use of pre-blended coco-biodiesel. Caltex explained that no tests have been conducted on the long-term effects of CME-blended diesel on oil companies' storage

tanks and on motor vehicles' fuel injectors. Selling a relatively untested product like CME may unduly expose the company and its retailers to consumer complaints and lawsuits, Caltex said.

Disputed

Caltex's stand was disputed by The Philippine Biodiesel Association (TPBA) whose convenor, Cris Michelena, claimed that CME has been the main ingredient of aviation lubricants for many years, proving that its technical excellence has long been tried, tested and used.

The issues presented by Caltex, TPBA said, are those associated with rapeseed and soybean biodiesels which are widely used in North America and Europe and which are highly unsaturated. These



problems don't exist with CME since CME is highly saturated (91 percent) and thus stable against oxidation and the resulting bacterial growth and corro-

vehicles. However, the contract stipulates that the buyer, not the supplier, will shoulder the risks of using coco-biodiesel. This will not exactly reassure prospective biodiesel customers.

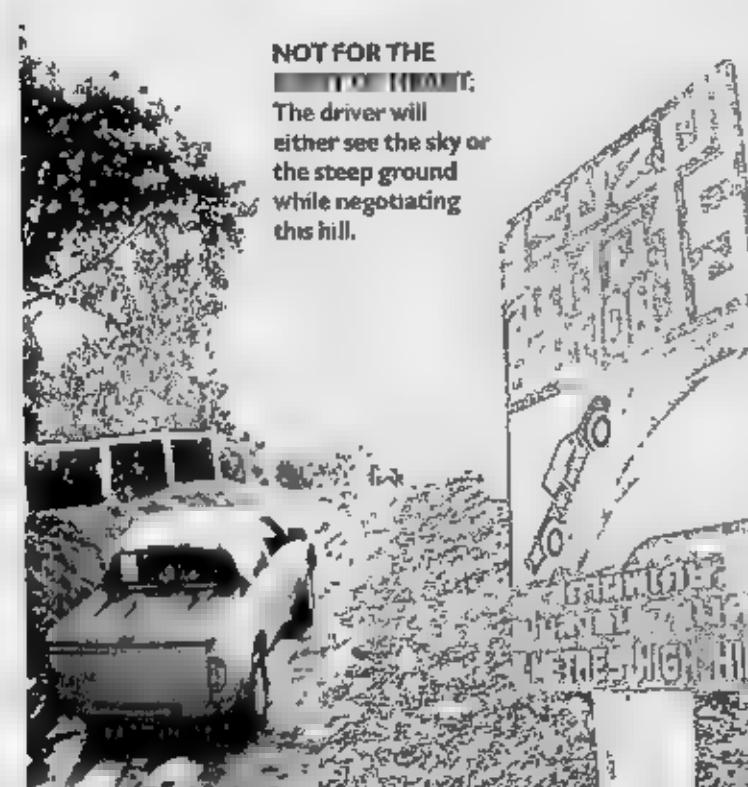
The good news is that this week, when the Senate discusses Senate Bill 226, which consolidates various bills on the use of biofuels, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel plans to add provisions to protect consumers. Admitting that various issues on the mandatory use of biofuels remain unresolved, Pimentel said that consumer choice and warranties should be embodied in SB 226.

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER. Heart attack: God's revenge for eating his animal friends.

Tested to face the roughest terrain

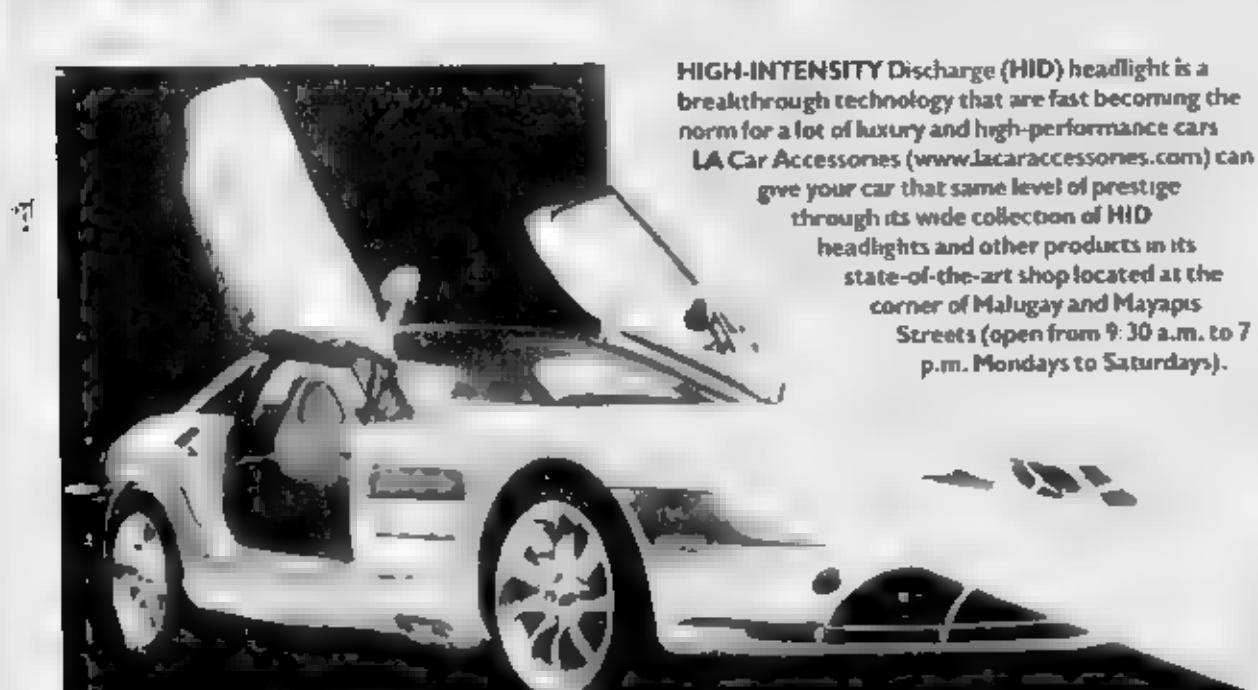


CAREFUL maneuvering is what you do you won't get stuck in the mud.



NOT FOR THE

WEAK-HEARTED:
The driver will either see the sky or the steep ground while negotiating this hill.



HIGH-INTENSITY Discharge (HID) headlight is a breakthrough technology that is fast becoming the norm for a lot of luxury and high-performance cars.

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give your car that same level of prestige through its wide collection of HID

headlights and other products in its state-of-the-art shop located at the corner of Malugay and Mayapis Streets (open from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays to Saturdays).



ATTENDING the presentation of the certified rating of the new BMW 520d are (from left) Mario Marasigan, director, DOE Energy Utilization Management Bureau; Leana A. Farrales, BMW Philippines corporate communications manager; Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony A. Abaya; and Clovis Tupas, assistant director, DOE Energy Utilization Management Bureau.

New BMW 520d posts top results in fuel economy run

THE NEW BMW 520D SHOWCASED ITS powerful yet fuel-efficient diesel engine at the recently staged Department of Energy (DOE) fuel economy run for passenger cars and light-duty vehicles. Amid adverse conditions—against gusting winds and steady downpour of rain brought by typhoon Caloy—the BMW 520d delivered outstanding results with an official DOE fuel consumption rating of 21.07 kilometers to a liter.

The government-sponsored efficiency



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OPEN FOR FRANCHISING

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

THEY CALL THE PLACE ISUZU 4WD Land but for the majority of the Thai people this 20-hectare property located in Pattaya (roughly 170 kilometers southeast of Thailand capital, Bangkok) is perhaps Isuzu's best-kept secret.

Here, Isuzu tests its upcoming vehicle model or finetune its existing ones as to whether they would stand up to the rigors of daily use and keep performing year after year.

Composed of 15 "stations," which are actually simulations of every tough terrain (except of course, ice, snow and boulders) that a standard vehicle model will probably encounter during its life, the Isuzu 4WD Land is a perfect place for any one who wants to hone his or her four-wheel driving skills.

Our group, composed of motoring journalists from the Philippines, was lucky enough to be invited to this place (courtesy of Isuzu Philippines Corp.) and discovered firsthand why the Isuzu D-Max has become the best-selling vehicle in the history of Thai-

TESTED/ B2.3

THE D-MAX showed off its well balanced frame while negotiating a 45-degree slope.

Tested to take on the roughest terrain

THE UNION BANK OF CALIFORNIA



Review Nitro
Operation Traffic
We Is a Highway
Get Stop Me Now

Penny Lane Hard Road

Day Of Love

Wet

THE END OF THE ROAD

TOP FIVE

Hot Red

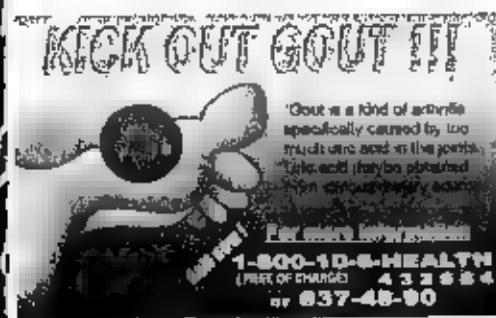
overdriving

Conventions

第二部分 五指山市的自然环境、资源、气候、土壤、水文、植被、生物、灾害与防治

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LIFE STYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

Send feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

BEAT BOREDOM

It's the tail-end of summer. By now, you've probably gone to the beach and back, have memorized the TV guide and gone to the mall so

often you've memorized the guards' faces. If you've run out of things to do, don't fret. 2bU! wants to save you from boredom. Here are ways

to make sure your remaining summer days are action-packed, adventure-rich and fun-filled. (And if there isn't

enough time to do everything on this list, keep it as an anti-boredom weapon for drab school year weekends.)

53 ways to keep yourself busy

By Pam Pastor and Trina Yap

WASH YOUR DAD'S CAR.

Take your dog for a long, long walk. Tutor your sister and prepare her for June—if she'll let you.

Use your talents for a good cause.

Alphabetize your CDs and DVDs.

Organize your computer files.

Burn CDs of your friends' pictures and give them copies.

Make a scrapbook of your summer.

E-mail relatives abroad.

Go to Baguio.

Read about good music.

Learn a new sport.

Have a food delivery race. Invite your friends over and order from two different places. Try to guess which resto will bring food to your doorstep faster.

Record yourself while singing.

Jump up and down on your bed.

Set aside clothes that no longer fit or you'd never wear again and donate to the needy. Same goes with toys, books, magazines, etc.

Clean your computer. Don't forget the keyboard and the mouse.

Try rearranging the furniture in your room for a fresh look.

Go through your "letter box" and reread letters you've kept through the years. Throw out the ones that only remind you of things you'd rather forget. Read out loud to friends and family the silly ones.

Organize a DVD marathon with your friends. Tell them it's potluck.

Play board games with your siblings.

Start a last-song-syndrome epidemic.

Rearrange items in the refrigerator. Put items nearing the expiration date at the front. Send bad items to the garbage bin.

Sort e-mail. Delete junk mail, and other unnecessary e-mail. Do the same with your mobile phone.

Recycle old notebooks, keep the ones still with clean pages. Bring the rest (include old test papers, scratch papers, etc.) to a recycling center.

Sharpen pencils and crayons.

Check your pen holder for pens that no longer have ink. Throw out ink-less, non-refillable ones.

Check if your old school uniforms still fit.

Give your dog a massage. Or better yet, create a "dog spa" and invite your friends and their pooches, too. It's a good bonding activity.

Update your computer's software, check for viruses, defragment!

Watch your favorite TV shows on mute. Then create your own dialogues and create twisted storylines.

Create a wellness kit—something you can reach into for the future when you hit a slump. This could contain a favorite book, a good music CD, a bar of chocolate, incense, a bag of tea... whatever will cheer you up. Then create one for a friend.

Squeeze toothpaste tubes from the bottom.

Give yourself a makeover.

Try to tickle yourself.

Create your own accent and use it when talking to family members.

Scan your pictures.

Come up with your own evil laughter and horror-movie scream.

Google your name.

Look for your childhood crush on Friendster.

Start a new collection.

Learn Photoshop.

Play dress-up.

Have a sleepover.

Eat a banana split in the middle of the night at the lobby of the Peninsula.

Eat fishballs.

Ride the LRT or MRT from end to end just for the heck of it.

Hold a garage sale.

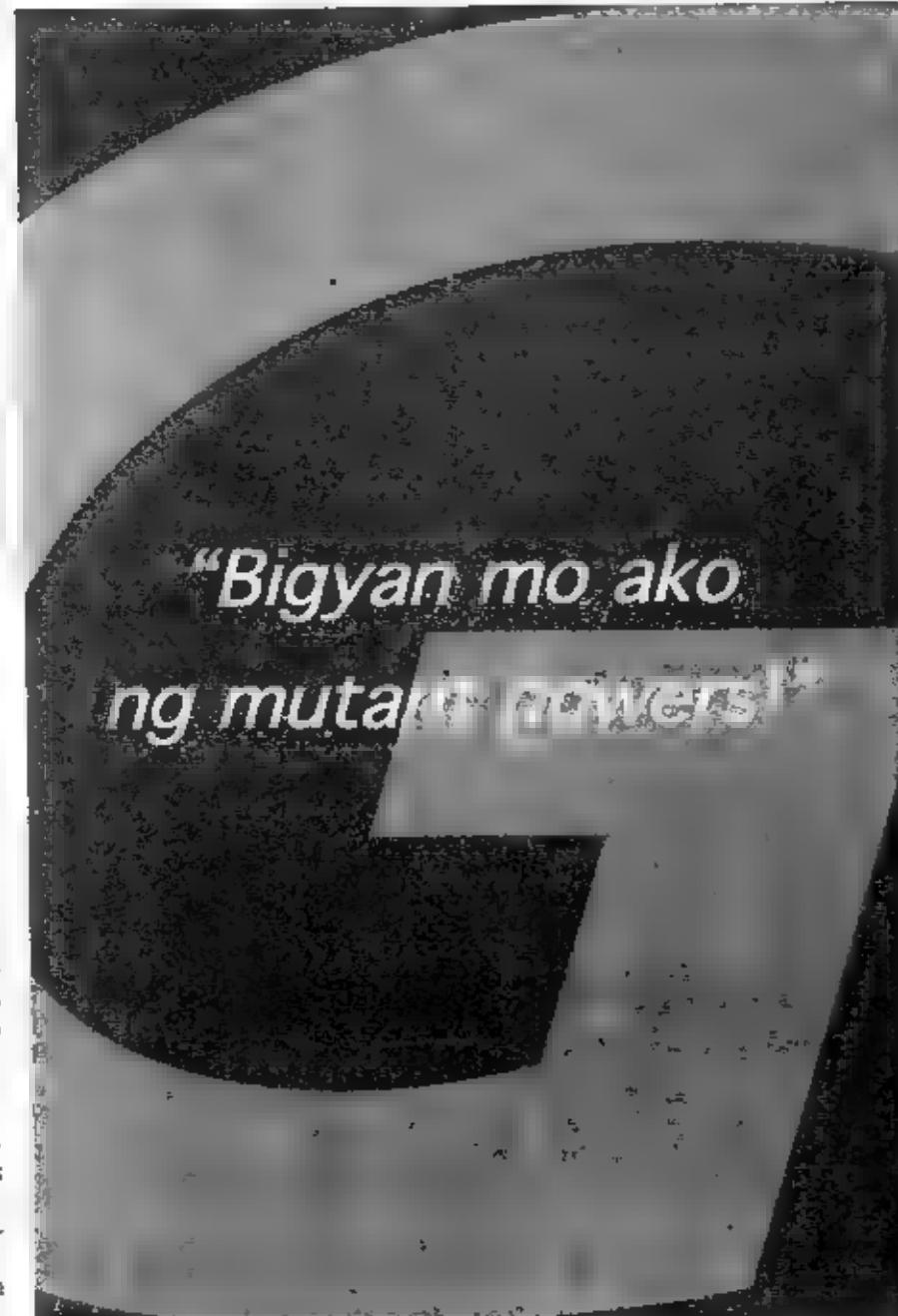
Join a radio contest.

Plant a tree.

Attempt to make your own clothes.

Read the dictionary.

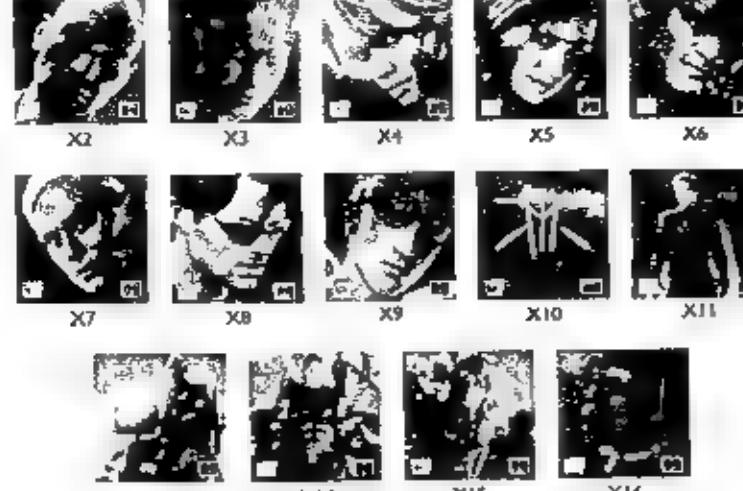
Cook a meal for mom and dad.



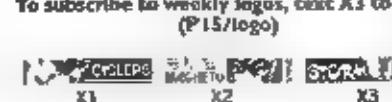
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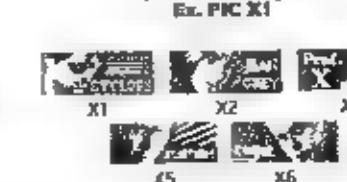
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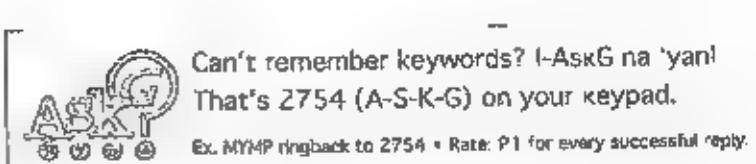
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Ex. PIC X1



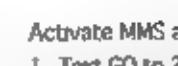
Rates: P15/logo, P20/wallpaper, P15/text card



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That's 2754 (A-S-K-G) on your keypad.
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2. Upon receipt of the settings, save them on the phone.
3. Send a local MMS message for only P5.00 to activate the service.

apo chief, ang lakas mo sa **Globe**

Get to know a new YOU

INQ7 comes up with a more interactive youth section

By Joey Alarilla
INQ7.net

WHETHER YOU'D LIKE TO READ about the latest trends in fashion, pop culture and the party scene; get to know a lot of young people and the businesses they've put up, orgs they've joined or causes they've embraced; showcase your blogs, podcasts, pics, poems and personal essays; talk about the latest books, gadgets, movies and music albums; or share your passion for comic books, anime and other hobbies, the new YOU has something for you.

YOU, INQ7.net's site for the interactive youth, includes the online editions of the INQUIRER's 2bUI and Super! sections.

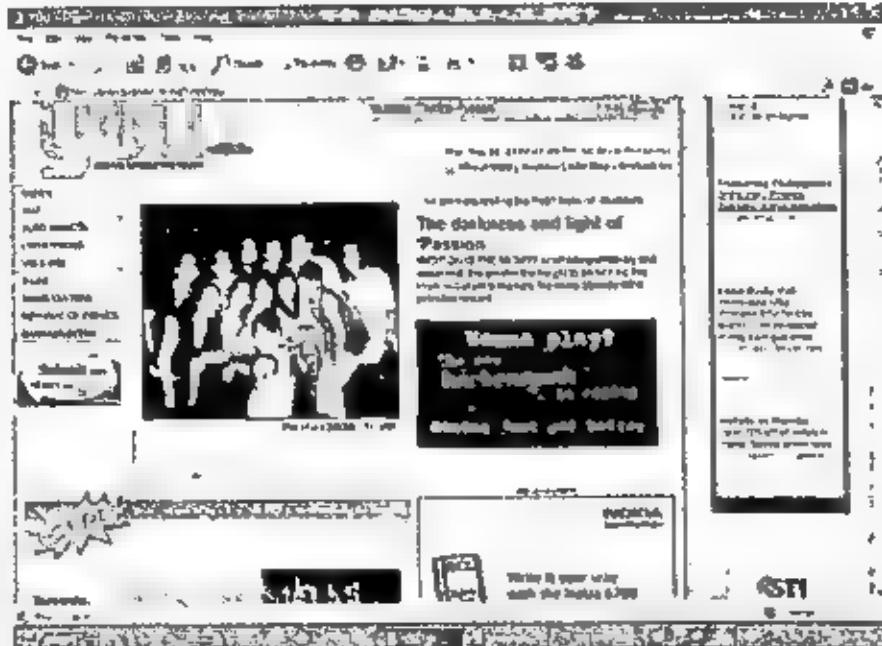
While the current YOU site is still online at you.7.net, you could already check out the new look at <http://showbizandstyle.7.net/you>. This is still a beta site, so please bear with us if some features don't work and you see some bizarre bugs, which our resident techies are in the process of squashing.

The revamp is part of the migration of the entire INQ7 network of sites to a new template and content management system. We hope you'll like what you see, and please feel free to tell us what you think. We'd really appreciate your feedback.

With the launch of the new YOU, I'm looking forward to closer collaboration with Pam Pastor and better integration between the print and online editions of 2bUI and Super! Pam and I have been informally discussing how our content will complement each other, to give you readers a unique experience that combines the best qualities of print and online.

The new YOU already has plenty of stuff to help you make the most out of the remaining days of summer and share your experiences with other young people from all over the country—and even around the world.

Got a great tan you'd like to show off, or happy memories of your outdoor adventures and other summer activities that you'd like to preserve for posterity? Then send your pics to YOU's new Barkada Scene online gallery. Maybe they're photos of you and your barkada enjoying a concert or showing off your moves on the dance floor. Maybe they're pics of your LAN parties, online gaming sessions and



BBs. We'd like to find out how you spent your summer, and yup, a picture's worth a thousand words. We'll even start accepting videos you've shot with your digital video recorders, mobile phones or PDAs once we've completed the migration to the new YOU site. More on that soon.

Events calendar

Barkada Scene also includes an events calendar, so if you've got stuff lined up for your school, org or company, just send us the details so we can share the sled with our readers.

And if you're dying to share a pic of you with your favorite celebrity, show it off in the Celebrity Cam section that we're creating for Barkada Scene. Just make sure to get their permission to have your pic taken with them, okay. We don't want stolen shots and we don't want you to start stalking celebrities.

Please e-mail your pics in jpeg format and include brief captions. Pics should be at least 300 pixels wide and at least 72 dpi. Actually, the bigger the pic, the better, so we can resize them for the thumbnail, standard and zoom versions.

Pics not to your taste? Then say it with words! YOU's Expressions section showcases poems, personal essays, short stories and book reviews submitted by readers. Tell us how you spent your summer.

mes. Which places did you visit? Did you get a summer job? Did you meet new people and make new friends? Which books did you enjoy reading? Maybe you joined a writer's workshop—tell us what the experience was like and share the insights you gained.

Blog services

Or maybe you'd rather blog about it. We've expanded YOU's Blog Addicts section to not only give you the profiles of featured bloggers, but also tackle the different things you want to know about the blogosphere.

To lock things off, we'd like you to take part in the "I Know What You Blogged This Summer" feature. This is just for fun, OK, not an actual contest, but we'll showcase the best blog entries. We'll include your byline (just let us know if you want to use a nick) and a link back to your blog post. Just blog about what you did this summer and e-mail us the link to your post, and we'll check it out.

We'd also love to hear from you about your thoughts on different issues that affect bloggers, like plagiarism and spam. Plus the different cool apps you use for your blog. What add-ons do you use to spice up your blog? Would you rather swear allegiance to Tag-Board or Flock? Maybe you've created a cool blog template.

plate—let us know so that our readers can check it out.

E-Life section

And since there's still more to life online than blogs, YOU also has an E-Life section to showcase the hardware and software that will please the inner geek in you. What's the latest mobile phone you've bought? Are you enjoying the 3G experience? Do you go to coffee shops not just for your caffeine but also your wi-fi fix?

We'd also love to hear (and see, in the case of video podcasts) the podcasts you've created yourself, so just point us in the right direction and we'll review your baby.

The new YOU will also feature the debut of Republic of Comics and Animé Culture. We want to share our love for comics and animé while also doing our share to support Filipino comic book writers and artists, and Filipino animators.

You'll be reading a lot about the local comic book scene, even as we discuss the latest in comic book events. Which comic books did you enjoy this summer? Share your thoughts about the just-concluded Infinite Crisis and the ongoing 52 and One Year Later titles from DC. Or maybe you'd like to weigh in on Marvel's Civil War. And of course, Neil Gaiman is God. Nuff said.

Meanwhile, Animé Culture will not only feature the actual shows and movies, but also the thriving community and culture that animé has created. We'll feature cosplayers, as well as animé-related video games, CDs, action figures, accessories and other merchandise. Cosplay pics are very much welcome.

Please e-mail all submissions to joeyalarilla@gmail.com. Unfortunately, we can't offer contributor's fees for what we'll publish online, but it's a chance to see your byline and share your message with a worldwide audience. All submissions are subject to editorial discretion.

Thanks again to all our readers for supporting YOU all these years. The new YOU is coming, and we'd like you all to be a part of it.

The author is the editor of YOU. E-mail him at joeyalarilla@gmail.com and visit his blog at babelmachine.wordpress.com.

Know thyself

THE WORLD CAN BE A FUN SCARY exciting and crazy place to live in. It helps if you can figure out who you are and how you can best deal with people.

It's not always easy, though. You have to figure out what you want to do with your life, what you're good at, what you're not good at, and how you can best deal with people.

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It's not always easy, though. You have to figure out what you want to do with your life, what you're good at, what you're not good at, and how you can best deal with people.

Ready, get set... game!

By Joey Alarilla
INQ7.net

HERE ARE A FEW GAMES YOU CAN TRY out to while away the last few weeks before school opens. Don't get too addicted, however. Remember that too much of anything is a bad thing, and games are no exception.

Attack of the MMOGs

Sure, massively multi-player online games is quite a mouthful, but many of us are already familiar with these online games that allow us to play with thousands of other players all over the Philippines and sometimes even around the world.

Ragnarok Online was what popularized MMOGs in the Philippines, but you have a host of other choices available, including MU, Khan, Tantra, Ran Online, SkyBlade, Priston Tale, Legend of Mir 2, TS Online, ROSE, RF Online and Guild Wars.

While ranging from fantasy to modern and sci-fi settings, what these games have in common are the thriving online communities that have sprung up around them. MMOGs are more than just the actual games. Lots of young people now bond with each other, communicate and collaborate through online games.

Just as in real life, it's all about getting along with people and having fun with your barkada.

Casual is cool

Some so-called hardcore gamers diss casual games, but these games are some of the most fun and addictive titles around, so don't let others spoil your fun.

As the name already tells you, casual games don't demand a lot of time from players, so you can enjoy them in bite-size chunks



without worrying about leveling up. These are usually games you can download quickly, play for hours and then set aside for weeks without getting left behind by other players. Well, assuming you can tear yourself away from these games. Some of the most popular examples include puzzle games such as Tetris and Bejeweled.

A number of Philippine online publishers are also becoming very serious about casual games, which appeal to more people. An example of this is the musical game Q2Jam. In real life, I have two left feet when it comes to dancing. Q2Jam proves I also have two left thumbs when it comes to this rhythm game.

If hip hop and basketball are your thing, then Freestyle might be just what the doctor ordered. This lightheop basketball game allows you to play three-on-three street ball games with your crew, while outfitting your player with all kinds of bling.

Meanwhile, if you find virtual pets irresistibly cute, GoPets allows you to meet different kinds of people from all over the world. No need to worry about breaking the ice. Your pets wander through the virtual world and

make acquaintances for you.

Different spins on casual games include the Gunbound online shooting game and the iTV relay series of mini-games.

You can also get tons of casual games from sites such as PopCap.com and apps like RealArcade. One of the games to check out is word puzzle game Bonnie's Bookstore. Filipino Von Caberto created the artwork for this game. Check out the story in the Gaming Scene section of www.hackenslash.net to find out how he collaborated entirely online with US developer Phil Steinmeyer on Bonnie's Bookstore.

Flash in the pan

We love Flash and Shockwave-based games, and one of the best at Shockwave.com is No Brainer 2. Find out how quickly you can answer stupid but fun questions.

Arcade madness

Who says you need PCs or your own video console to enjoy games?

Going to the arcade is a great way to spend quality time with the barkada. So how about some Mario loving with Mario Kart, and of course faves such as Tekken 5 and Dinosaur Duel?

Head on to TimeZone or Q Power Star for some arcade fun today.

These are just some of the ways you can have fun with games this summer. Just remember: Be a responsible gamer!

The author is the editor of hackenslash.net, the gaming site of INQ7.net. E-mail joeyal@7.net or visit babelmachine.wordpress.com.

Check out the May-June issue of Game, the gaming magazine of Hinge Inquirer Publishing.

Become a badminton star

OR AT LEAST PREPARE TO BE one.

The JVC Open Badminton Championships 2006, which will take place at the Glorietta Activity center July 2-9, will be accepting entries until June 10, 5 p.m. The qualifying rounds will be held June 25-July 1 at PowerSmash Badminton Center.

Now in its sixth year, this year's JVC Open was launched at the Renaissance Makati Hotel.

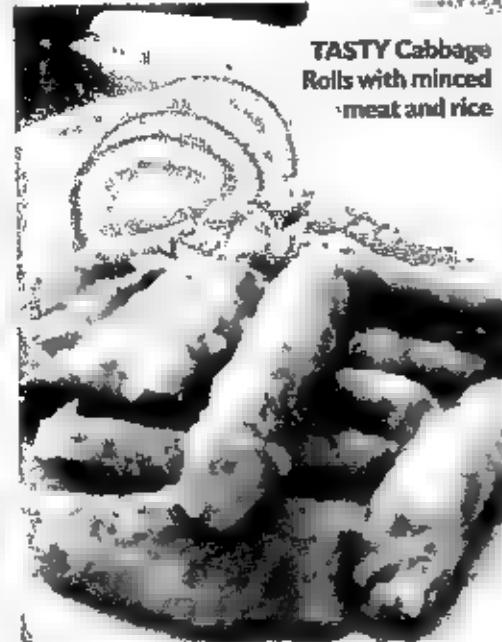
At stake are over P1 million in cash and other prizes from JVC and other sponsors like Victor, Bacchus Energy Drink, Lacta-



BUTCH Ramirez, Hideyuki Takato, Hon. José Cojuangco Jr., Dennis Salud, Mayor Jejomar Binay, lawyer Faustino Salud and Steve Montiveros



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Travel with your tastebuds

Manos' Greek Taverna's tasty, authentic cuisine makes the trip to Tagaytay worth it.

Text and Photos By Zee Castro
2but Correspondent

SINCE SUMMER IS JUST ABOUT GONE, and traveling to distant lands seem out of the question, why not have a gustatory adventure by traveling through your taste buds instead?

Destination: Greece

The Place: Manos' Greek Taverna

Location: Along Tagaytay-Sta. Rosa Road, Brgy. San Jose, Tagaytay City, across St. Francis seminary

This cozy food stop is run by chef Manos Sapountzakis and his wife Estrella. The interiors of the taverna are quite stark and simple. Greece's colors of blue and white are dominant all throughout the place. The walls are plastered with posters of beautiful scenery, and the windows are covered with light lace curtains that dance along with the breeze.

This is definitely not a fine-dining resto. As Manos explains, a *taverna* is the Greek equivalent of a high-class *carinderia* that offers good-quality food.

The tasty, authentic Greek cuisine, the taverna's cozy ambience and the warmth of its



CHICKEN a la Corfu, a sweet-sour combination

staff make the trip to Tagaytay well worth it!

First, try the Ouzo, an alcoholic clear-colored drink made from anise. A shot of Ouzo is poured into a glass of water. According to Manos, this makes for an authentic Greek appetizer.

For starters, try the fresh-baked bread paired with Tzatziki, a dip made of yogurt, garlic and olive oil (P80). Prepare for the dip's strong flavor.

The Greek Summer Salad has fresh greens and tomatoes drizzled with olive oil and topped off with black olives and feta cheese. The olive oil and olives are imported from plantations in Crete, says Manos. A generous serving will set you back P120. If you're more adventurous, try the Ratihika Vastru or Dandelion Salad (P90). Yep, it's made of dandelion leaves!

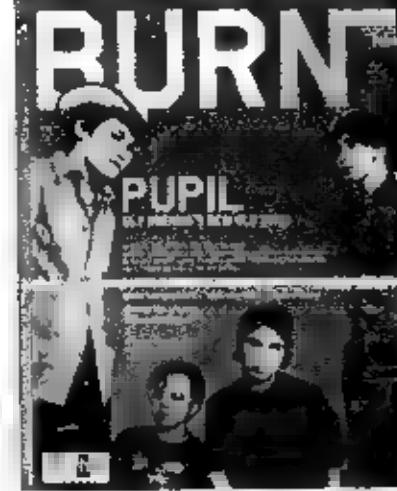
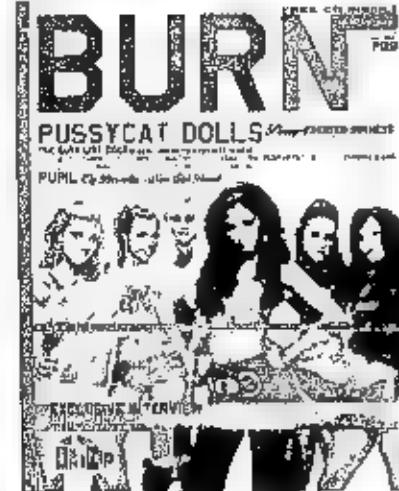
For the main dish, Taverna's bestseller is the Mousaka, made of eggplant, potatoes, zucchini, minced meat, eggs, wine, bechamel sauce, and cheese. At P180 a serving, it is worth every peso!

Other must-tries are the Lamb Fricasse, a stew of lettuce, onions, butter, dill eggs and spices (P260); Grilled Lamb Ribs that come with vegetable sidings (P270); Cabbage Rolls with minced meat, rice and spices (P155); and the Pasticcio, a Greek version of Baked Mac (P120).

To cap off the experience, enjoy a serving of Baklava (P150) with a cup of Greek coffee.

Call Manos' Green Taverna at 0916-4298358 and 0916-6090701.

E-mail the author at zeecastro@yahoo.com



Get some MUSIC into your life

AND WE DON'T MEAN JUST LISTENING to more music. Why not learn to play a musical instrument as well? Or read up on your favorite bands, find out what gigs to go to, what new music's out there.

You can do all that just by picking up Burn, the new music magazine from Hinge INQUIRER Publications. The all-inclusive Burn magazine covers all genres of music—pop, rock, indie, even jazz and Latin.

You'll likely find something that will suit your tastes, and also learn more about other genres (you might be missing out on something).

You can read about well-known bands like Pupil, Up Dharma Down, Kapitid and Orange and Lemons, as well as up-and-coming groups like Nyko Maca, Sitti, Bagetsafonk, Chillees and Gunning Festival.

A free compact disc that comes

with every magazine features a "radio" show hosted by former NU107 DJ Zach Lucero (the same Zach Lucero who's the drummer of rock band Imago) with short interviews, in-studio performances and other music tracks. Some of the tracks are rarities, so the CDs are actually collectibles (hang on to every copy and see you on eBay in five years).

A favorite feature is the Music Lesson both on the CD and in the magazine. Burn's April-May issue features a guitar tutorial from guitarist Francis Reyes of legendary Pinoy rock band The Dawn, while the June-July issue has a hot, hot, hot lesson in samba percussions from Barucada leader Inky de Dios.

It's a lot to get from only one music magazine and, at P120, it's well worth the price. Burn is available at newsstands and some bookstores.

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NEW



NEW



NEW



Relive the Piolo-Judy Ann 'kilig' moments in 'Don't Give Up On Us' by touring the postcard-pretty Cordillera hideaway

Take a break in Sagada

By Melissa Telan
2bUI Correspondent

IF YOU WANT TO MAKE THE most of what's left of summer but are tired of the beach, why not head to cool Sagada for a different kind of adventure? All you need is a sturdy pair of feet, a liking for nature, a couple of friends to share the experience with, and about P3,000 for a four-day stay. Ready to go? Here's a quick guide to help you out.

Getting there

Located 275 km north of Metro Manila, Sagada is a long 12-13 hours ride away, but is well worth the wait. If you get dizzy easily be sure to take Bonamine, as the roads tend to be

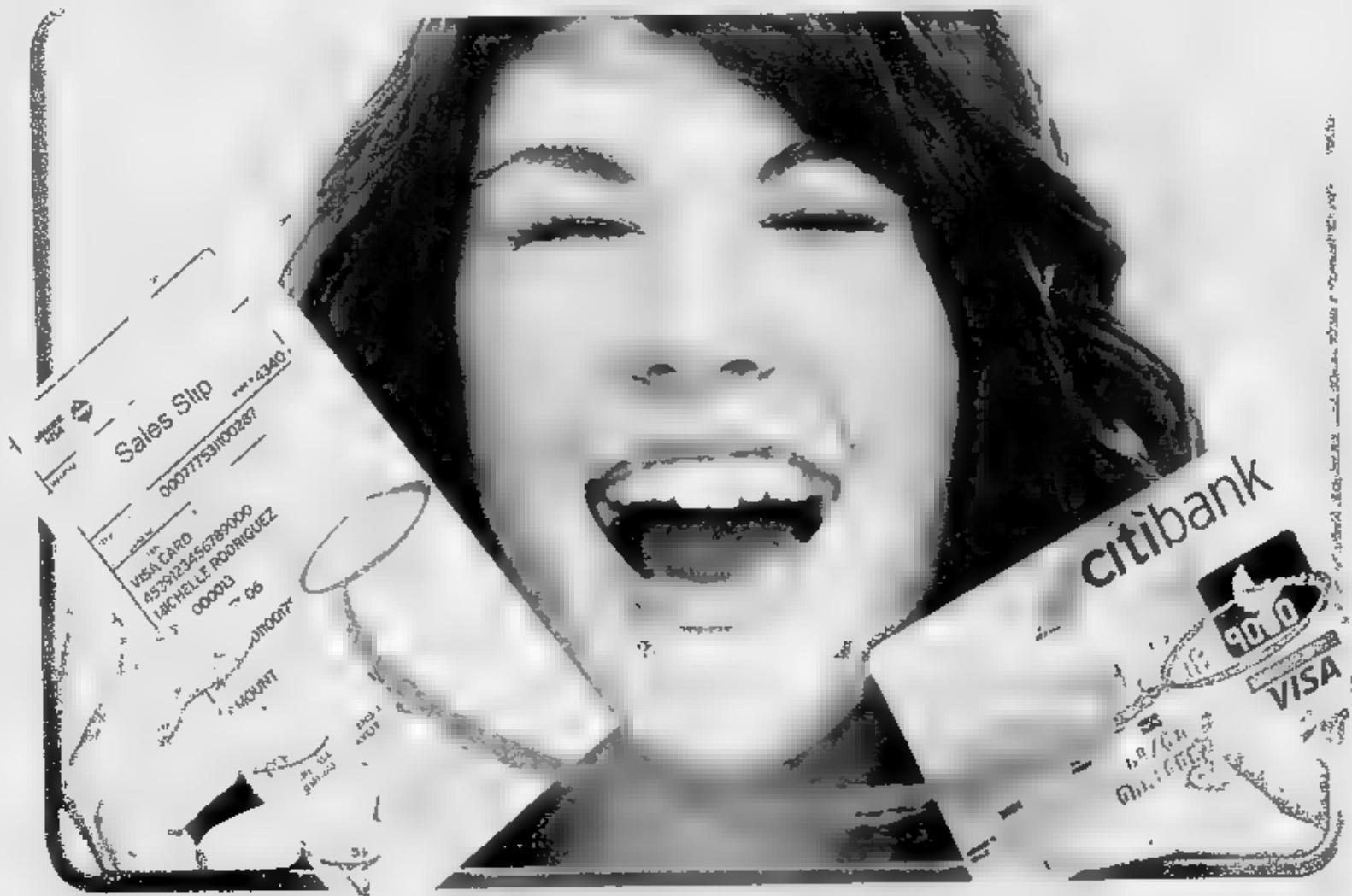


BREATHTAKING scenery at Kiltepan view point

ONE of the many rice terraces seen on the road from Banaue to Sagada

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rough and snake-like.

If you're planning to take a bus, there are two routes to Sagada—one via Banaue-Bontoc and another via Baguio. The rates are practically the same. For those who haven't seen the famous rice terraces, the Banaue route is recommended. It is also more scenic as you get to pass by other smaller rice terraces, as well as get a fantastic view of the Cordilleras.

If you wish to take the Banaue route, contact Autobus at tel. 7358096 for reservations. Buy tickets early since they only have one trip leaving at 10 p.m. each day. If you're planning to take the Baguio route, contact Victory Liner Cubao at tel. 7274534.

Cost: From Metro Manila, about P1,200 round trip.

Where to stay

Locals claim that Sagada is now the second top tourist spot of the country, next only to Boracay. To house its growing number of guests, Sagada boasts of numerous inns to accommodate everyone, so it shouldn't be a problem to find lodging only upon arrival. However, when going there during the holidays or long weekends, it is imperative to book early; inns tend to be full on such days that guests are sometimes forced to stay in the hospital until a vacancy comes.

Sagada is not a place to look for hotel-type accommodations, so don't fret if your bathroom is cramped or your pillows are threadbare. Most inns have a rustic feel to it, which suits the ambiance of the place.

If you can get a room, stay in St. Joseph's Resthouse, which sits on top of a hill and is at the center of the town. It also offers the most amazing view of the mountains. Rates start at P200 per head, per night.

Other places to stay are: Rock Inn (one of the newer inns in Sagada, also the place featured in the Piolo Pascual-Judy Ann Santos movie "Don't Give Up On Us"), George Guest House and Alfredo's Inn.

What to do

Upon arrival, guests should visit the Municipal Hall where the Tourist Center is located. Hiring a local guide is necessary for safety reasons. Fees start at P400 per guide per tourist spot, with each guide capable of leading anywhere between four to 10 persons (depending on the tourist spot). Be prepared to do a lot of walking, since that is the only way to appreciate Sagada's lush sceneries. Inhaling the musky-sweet pine-tinged air while climbing a mountain is perhaps as exhilarating as reaching the mountain's summit.

They say you cannot claim to have been to Sagada without spelunking in Sumaging cave, a 30-minute walk from the town center. It is an experience different from others—from wiggling through the cave's narrow crevices to clinging on rock boulders for your dear life, to finally dipping your feet in the cool underground river as a reward for your hard work. It takes an hour to descend the cave, and a bit longer climbing back up.

To see how the Igorot buried their dead, take a hike to Echo Valley and see the Lumang burial caves. The old Igorot practice is to tie their deceased seated on a chair-like contrivance and place such contrivances inside caves. The remains can be seen in the valley's caves. Also hidden in the valley's dense foliage are the famous hanging coffins of Sagada.

Other places to visit: Kiltepan view, Bomod-ok Falls, and Lake Danom.

Food trip

After hours of trekking, Sagada rewards its guests by offering mouthwatering cuisine, only made better by the crisp mountain air. Try St. Joe's Café, located beside St. Joseph's Resthouse, where you can dine al fresco with the view of the breathtaking Cordilleras as a background. Yoghurt House offers homemade yummy yoghurt (hence, its name) as well as pastas and the best-tasting Mixed Vegetable fried rice.

If you're in Sagada on a Saturday, by all means get reservations for the Saturday French dinner buffet at the cozy Log Cabin. For P250, guests can sample dishes prepared by Chef Aklay, a Frenchman who came to Sagada more than a decade ago. Reserve at least three days early, as seating is limited. It is common for the Log Cabin staff to turn away guests on Saturday nights since they are usually full.

Email the author at melissatelan@yahoo.com



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Out of the closet

By Bianca Consunji
2bU Correspondent

SUMMER is the best time to clean out the skeletons in your closet—the clothes you don't use, that is.

While it's not a bad thing to keep a couple of pieces, such as the ratty old shirts you love wearing at home and would never throw away, or your fluffy prom gown, some things simply have to go. So if you're still keeping that hideous orange-and-green sunflower blouse along with moldy old clogs in hopes of a '90s comeback, it's time to let go.

This is easier said than done for many pack rats. However, the sooner you accept that there is no way to make your closet any larger (short of building a new one), the faster you'll get your organizing done.

Block off a day to clear your closet. If you cram in everything in a couple of hours, your room will be back to its original (messy) condition in a few weeks. Empty out everything so you can really see what items to keep and what things should be thrown or given away. Also, if you invest more time in organizing your space, chances are you'll be more careful not to make a mess of it again any time soon.

Have trash bags and boxes ready. Again, be prepared to be callous. Don't hesitate to throw things away. You will not regret disposing of those acid-green shorts. If you're sorting out papers, be sure to read everything twice to make sure you don't throw out anything important.

Buy closet organizers. Extra boxes and shelves inside your closet space guarantee more space to stash your things. Put items with a common theme (polo shirts, tank tops, underwear) in one area, so you—or your helper—will be able to store and find clothes and miscellaneous items quickly.

Color-code. No, this is not for obsessive-compulsive people only. Organizing your clothes by color and style will help you store and find stuff more efficiently. So if you can't find White Ruffled Skirt in between Embroidered White Tank Top and White Linen Pants, that can only mean it's in the laundry or is lost. Either way, at least no one can say, "It must be somewhere in the depths of your closet."

Sell or donate. To get rid of your clothes effectively, either sell your stuff online or have a garage sale. Barring that, take the noble option: Donate. Call your favorite charity to ask where you can drop off goods, but make sure the stuff you give is in good condition.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

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DIVINE COMEDY



BY STEVEN PABALINAS

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a strong social conscience and often become involved in causes dear to your heart. Others listen to you because you're imaginatively expressive. You invariably fight for the underdog. You're philosophical. You're attracted to ideas. In your later years (late 50s, 60s and 70s), you become surprisingly flamboyant. Expect to start off on a new path this year.

Birthdate of: Tommy Chong, actor; Bob Dylan, singer; Patti LaBelle, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Today you can think of new ways to earn money. You're feeling very resourceful, and you're thinking about possessions and your cash flow. (Unfortunately, cash always seems to flow one way.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): If you're looking for secrets or answers to difficult questions, today you might find them. Your research skills are strong. (In addition, information just comes to you today.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Discussions with parents and bosses are quite forceful today. You know what you want, and you intend to get it. (Remember that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You have some good ideas about how to improve your appearance today. Follow up on them. All good things begin with a positive intention to improve something.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Resist the urge to try to make over a friend or suggest improvements. (Nobody really likes this.) Turn this urge inward and think about how to improve your friendships.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Religious and political discussions interest you today. Someone might say something that shifts your point of view. It's good to keep an open mind, but not so open that everything falls out.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might see new applications for old things today. Or you might want to recycle something you own so that someone else can use it in a new way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Conversations with others might become quite heated this morning. If you sense this starting to happen, just wait till later in the day.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is an excellent day to make improvements where you work. However, don't be pushy about them. You won't win any points for doing that.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might see new applications for old things today. Or you might want to recycle something you own so that someone else can use it in a new way.

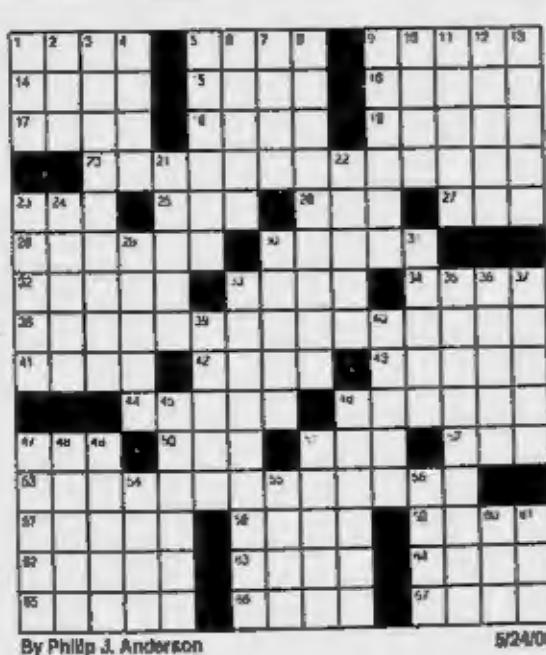
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1 Conversed
2 Ms. Thurman
39 Humor based
upon
contradiction
40 Holy honoree
45 "Messiah"
composer
46 Rum cocktail
47 Missouri feeder
48 Marry again



GET A DOSE OF REALITY

By Pam Pastor

NEWSFLASH: YOU DON'T HAVE to tune in to cable television for quality documentaries.

Howie Severino, Jay Taruc, Kara David, Raffy Tima, Sandra Aguinaldo and the team of GMA 7's *I-Witness* have been making documentaries about subjects close to our hearts and our homes.

And they have compiled their viewers' favorites in two DVDs—The Best of *I-Witness* Volumes 1 and 2.

Volume 1 is packed. In "Barbero," which was a finalist in the Magnolia Award at the 10th Shanghai TV Festival in 2004 and winner of a 3rd place Certificate for Creative Excellence at the US International Film and Video Festival 2004, Taruc spends time with people who rely on garbage for food and livelihood. In "Huling Prinsesa," David explores the world of the *binukot* (well-kept maiden) in Capiz.

Is it impossible for a poor coun-

try to take care of animals and ensure their freedom? Severino answers this question with "Safari" that takes him from the Manila Zoo to Africa. Aguinaldo learns about the hardships of tuna fishermen and their families in "Sa Tuna's Ginhawa." Tima presents a

closer look at the "Ayta"—before and after Pinatubo.

Volume 2

The second DVD is equally interesting. It includes Taruc's "U-Belt"; David's "Buto't Balat" (winner of Best Program in the Social Awareness Category, Asia TV Awards 2005, and finalist in the

Adult Education Category, Japan Prize 2005); Aguinaldo's "Karangaya: Inareglong Kasal"; Severino's "Little Bad Boy" (this documentary that traces Rizal's bachelor life in Europe, was a grant recipient of Asia-Europe Foundation in 2004); and Tima's "Ang Tito Kong Babae."

The broadcasters take reportage one step forward, with Taruc eating food salvaged from garbage cans around the city; Severino drinking fresh animal's blood with a tribe in Africa; David crossing mountains to find the last *binukot* in Capiz; Aguinaldo braving the wild waves of the Pacific Ocean to accompany fishermen on their search for tuna.

More than just reporting, the hosts of *I-Witness* take a personal approach to the documentaries, making it their mission to deliver a complete story.

Now that's reality TV.

The Best of I-Witness DVDs Volumes 1 and 2 are available at PowerBooks branches nationwide.

THE BEST OF
WITNESS
VOLUME 1



Share your secret with the world



THE IDEA WAS SIMPLE BUT brilliant. For a while now, the creator of the Post Secret blog (<http://postsecret.blogspot.com>) has been asking people to mail in their secrets anonymously on one side of a homemade postcard.

According to the site, "Each secret can be a regret, hope, funny experience, unseen kindness, fantasy, belief, fear, betrayal, erotic desire, feeling, confession, or childhood humiliation. Reveal anything—as long as it is true and you have never shared it with

anyone before."

These postcards are then scanned and new ones are uploaded onto the Post Secret blog every Sunday for the world to see.

Last Mother's Day, this was one of the new secrets posted: "Mom, I'm sorry I ran away all the time. I wasn't running from you. I was running from me, and I still am."

Here are other memorable secrets:

"I'm terrified of not existing."

"I cried for Anakin Skywalker in 'Star Wars Episode III' but not for the

tsunami victims."

"My mom killed my dad, long before he killed himself."

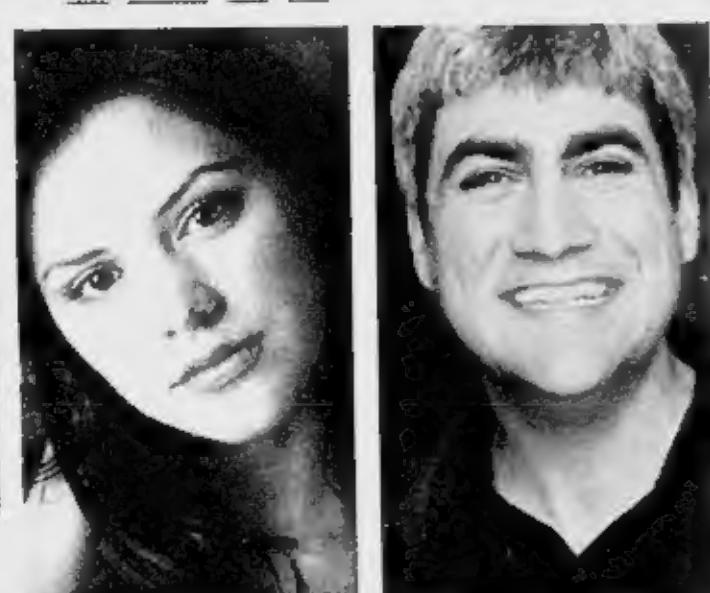
"When I see an ugly bride, what I am really seeing is a glimmer of hope for the future. Maybe I will marry someday."

Some secrets posted on the site are funny, some touching, some painful, some goosebump-inducing. But they all offer a peek into the human soul.

Every day thousands of people from around the world visit the site, to read other people's secrets and to identify with them. One reader from Calgary said, "When I read these, I don't feel so alone."

The blog has become so popular that it has won awards and has even spawned a book that reprints the most requested postcards from the blog.

Whether you choose to share your own secret, or read about someone else's, the Post Secret blog is a must-visit. It's a virtual connection, a peek into the real thoughts of real people.



KATHARINE McPhee and Taylor Hicks: McPhee vs Soul Patrol

Win 'American Idol' goodies!

GRAB YOUR LAST CHANCE to win *American Idol* goodies this season! Make sure you pay attention when you watch *American Idol* on Star World tonight, because 2bU is giving away exclusive, limited-edition *American Idol* goodies to three fans who can answer the following questions correctly about tonight's show:

1. What will Katharine McPhee's first song be?
2. What will Taylor Hicks sing last?
3. Who will win this year's *American Idol*?

Tune in to *American Idol* season 5 on StarWorld, direct via satellite every Wednesday and Thursday, 5 p.m., with replays at 8 and 11:30 p.m. Don't miss the excitement of the grand finals on May 24 and 25, only on StarWorld!

Here are last week's winners:

1. Angie Tan
2. Julie T. Lim
3. Maria Rosario Insigne

Winners may claim their prizes from Starworks at 7/F, 105 Rada St. Legaspi Village, Makati City, or they may call May Legaspi at 7513805 to 06.



WINNER Hugh Pedron (center)

Lucky 'Idol' fanatic will see season finale live!

HUGH PEDRON OF PARANAQUE bested other finalists in Star World's American Idol Know-It-All Trivia Contest at the Dolphin Park, Glorietta 4, recently. His reward: a trip to the US to watch this season's hotly contested

American Idol finale performances tonight and the awarding tomorrow, courtesy of Star World. With him in photo are Star World's Sasa Carlos-Tan, Adel Chik, and 89.9 DJs Kelly and Joey.

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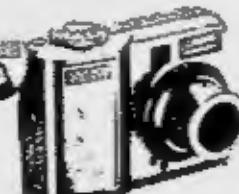
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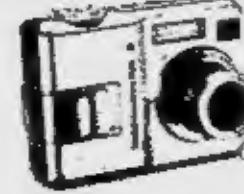


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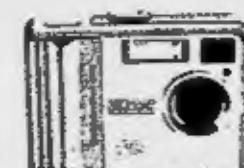
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TIMELESS Relaxation living room



JIE PAMBID, PSID dean; Dong Ha Jang, VP for consumers electronics; and Jerry Lacson, GM for consumers electronics marketing-Sepco



PEN ROQUE, Cheil communications manager; Pambid and Angie Limbaco, brand management head; with PSID students who designed the Timeless Relaxation living room

Dare to design

By Pam Pastor

SAMSUNG HAD A CHALLENGE FOR students of the Philippine School for Interior Design (PSID). They were asked to create four eye-catching spaces—a living room, a den, a kitchen and a bedroom—inspired by Samsung's LCD and SlimFit TVs.

The PSID students tackled the mission readily and, a few weeks ago, their exhibit was unveiled at the Shangri-La Mall.

The exhibit was held at the same time as the Dare To Compare Mall Tour, where Samsung encouraged consumers to check out its latest television lineup and compare them to offerings of other brands.

Samsung's newest TV products include a unique LCD (liquid crystal display) television that offers a 5,000:1 contrast ratio and a 12.8 billion-color display and the only 40 cm-deep flat SlimFit TV.

The living room

Chai Lopez, Xavier Peñafiel, Anna Francesca Villacorte, Sheanah Chan, Christian Santos, Henry Paguio, Karen Uy, Leah

Balagtas, Mark Jeff Pecayo, Margarita Borja, Samantha Joe Fu and Jimlet Avilla worked on the living room that they called Fountain of Memories. The name was a nod to the cascading fountain that the group added to their modern-designed room.

To add drama to their space, they used an incised painted wall as the backdrop of the LCD TV. To achieve a "simple and sophisticated" look, the team played with the contrast of light and dark colors and selected textures that heightened the room's relaxing ambience.

The kitchen

Gigi Figueiroa, April Sim-Alcantara, Jewel Castro and Bursely Co created a kitchen called Salt and Pepper. The name was a nod to the room's achromatic color scheme. The team used Italian Bisazza mosaic tiles to add accents to the room's clean lines and smooth finish.

The room featured a Samsung 26-inch LCD television, washing machine and MHSS refrigerator. Sim-Alcantara said, "I think Samsung is a brave brand because it strives hard to create digital lifestyle trends through its

creativity and innovativeness, as well as enhance the lives of its consumers through cutting-edge products."

The bedroom

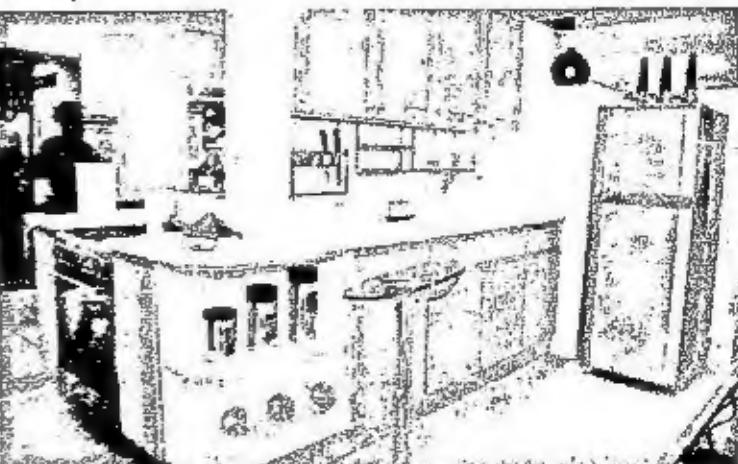
Jade Ang Ban Giok, Aisa Sta. Maria, Danika Rae Madrid, Bernard Valencia, Dianne Sy, Dimples Panotes and Chelsia Li, who were tasked with designing a bedroom, came up with the Chic and Sleek in Serene Dimensions concept.

The group used a 32" SlimFit TV as the room's focal point, along with a split-type air-conditioner. Relaxing colors and soft fabrics helped transform the space into a comfortable cocoon, a cozy bedroom, an urban refuge.

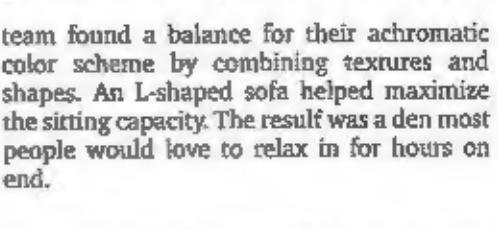
The den

Miko Sta. Ana, Le-Anne Rubiano, Karen Eleazar, Cheska Nolasco, Gaea Anne Fu and Christine Monteverde, assigned to create a den, conceptualized a room for Timeless Relaxation. The group added Samsung's 40" LCD TV to their inviting and contemporary room.

For the elegant and tasteful creation, the

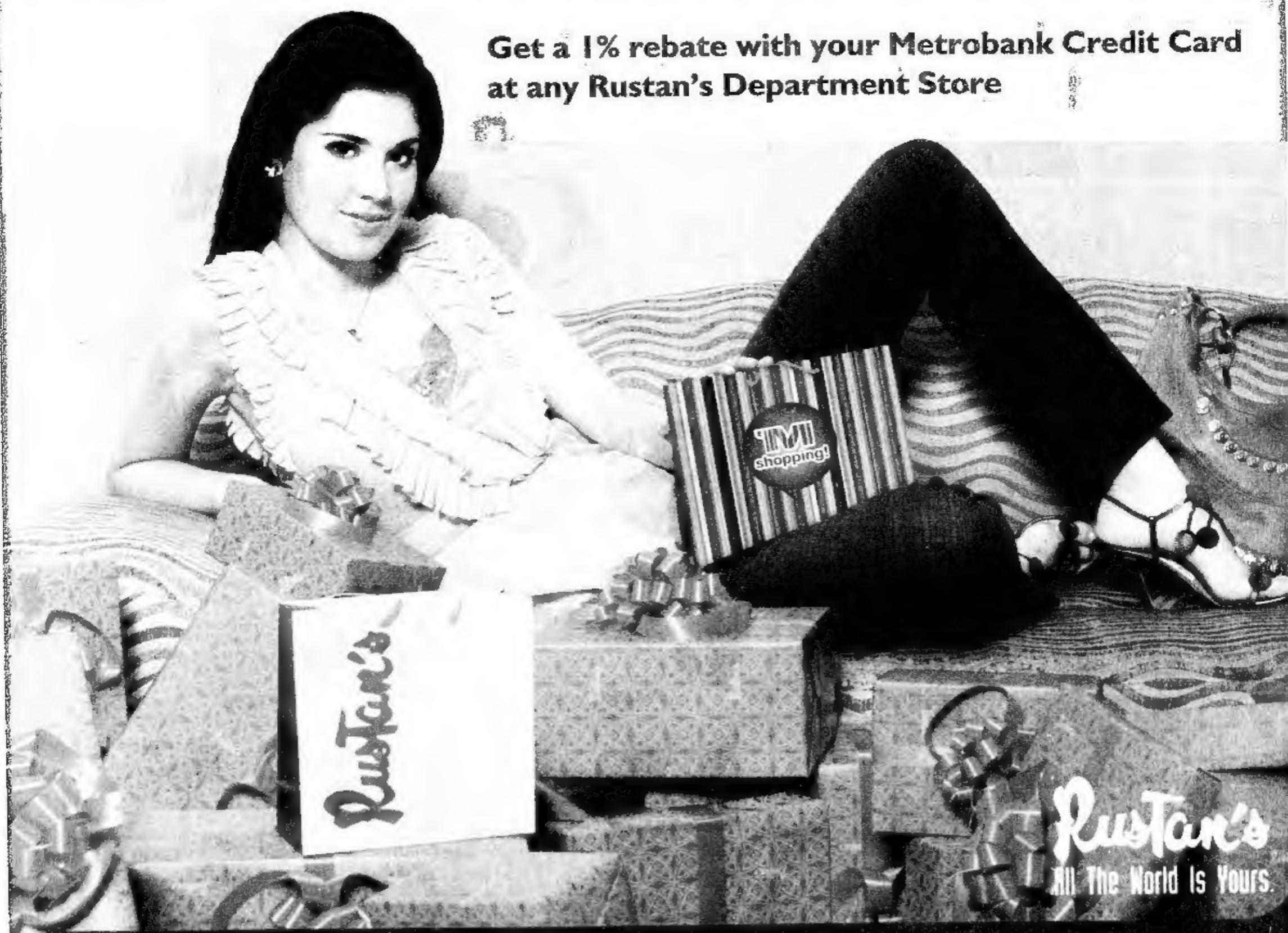


SALT and Pepper kitchen



team found a balance for their achromatic color scheme by combining textures and shapes. An L-shaped sofa helped maximize the sitting capacity. The result was a den most people would love to relax in for hours on end.

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